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KASHMIR'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE (1931-1939)

MUHAMMAD YUSUF GANAI

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KASHMIR'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE 1931 – 1939

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To
Abdul Ahad Azad
A Humanist Poet of Kashmir
who
died unsung and unwept
on April 5th, 1948.

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PREFACE

Let me share with my readers some experiences that ultimately paved the way for me to write this book. It was during the early seventies of the twentieth century, when I was not more than nine years old, that I accompanied my father to Srinagar. During our short stay in the city he took me to the shrine of Khanqahi Mualla. There he pointed to a grave which was guarded by the police personnel saying that Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad was buried there. He introduced me to the deceased personality. Since then it haunted my mind that if he was a prominent leader of the freedom movement, why then had the State authorities stationed a police picket to guard his grave?

This incident marked the beginning of a prolonged dialogue between my illiterate but sensitive father and me. He revealed the heart-rending stories of the depredations and atrocities committed upon the peasantry by the State authorities and the privileged land holders of the Dogra regime. These stories heard at the knee of my father also revealed the extremely pauperized conditions of the peasantry. Some of this information was passed on to him by his forefathers and some he had witnessed himself. Since then I developed interest in knowing the past of Kashmir. And it was this interest which drew me towards exploring the history of freedom movement.

The present work pertains to the first phase of the freedom movement of Kashmir when the movement was run under the auspices of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. An attempt has been made to study the political consciousness in the context. Besides, it focuses on the questions: Why did the freedom struggle of Kashmir start very late in comparison to Indian freedom movement? Why was the freedom movement of Kashmir initiated only by the Kashmiri Muslims and why the non-Muslims not only kept aloof from the movement but also left no stone unturned to sabotage it? Further the role of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and the broad vision of its leadership has been brought to light for the first time. The present work has also discussed the reasons that accounted for the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. Did the

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cherished dream of the Kashmiri nationalists to form a common platform come to fruition? The present work also attempts to answer this crucial question.

In completing this work I have been helped and encouraged by my colleagues, friends and other well-wishers. It is a pleasant duty for me to acknowledge their help and guidance from which I have benefited. My grateful thanks are first and foremost due to my teacher, Professor Muhammad Ashraf Wani, whose valuable guidance, advice and generous help have always encouraged me. To have an opportunity of learning under his inspiring guidance has been my proud privilege. I also owe a deep sense of gratitude to my other teachers, Professor Abdul Qayum Rafiqi and Professor Mohammad Ishaq Khan. I also extend my thanks to Dr. Bashir Ahmad Khan, Dr. Parveez Ahmad and Dr. Farooq Fayaz for their help and encouragement. I am indebted to all those elders who have spent a part of their grown up ages during the period of my studies for providing me first hand information.

Finally, this work would not have reached a happy culmination had there not been the active support and profound affection from the side of my parents and spouse who adorned my lips with invaluable smiles on the occasions I used to be under mental strain.

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Introduction

Freedom is one of the basic needs without which a living organism cannot develop. Plants, animals and human beings, all struggle for freedom if kept under restrictions in any way, because it is in their nature either to remain free or perish. From the very beginning when the man was born, he started his struggle for freedom because he found that he could not do whatever he wished. The forces of nature thwarted him, therefore, he fought against them. In comparison to animals man was bestowed with reason and he could retain events in memory and draw inferences from them for his own guidance. As a result of long experiences and constant struggle he was successful to a great extent in facing the mysteries of the nature and defending himself against her vagaries. It was this long drawn struggle that ultimately resulted in the birth of the civilization.

The ideal of freedom and social justice has had several interpretations from age to age. It has developed through the centuries. The concept of freedom that we now have was unknown to the people of Kashmir only a century ago and not to speak of those who lived in the Valley thousands of years back. No doubt our ancestors had their own ideals and in certain respects they excelled us but in certain others they were far behind the modern age. Some of our ideals were unthinkable for them because the environments in which such ideas could not be born in the minds of the people surrounded them.

The transfer of Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh and to the "heirs male of his body in lieu of seventy five lakhs of rupees" by the British in 1846 by virtue of the Treaty of Amritsar marks a watershed

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in the history of the people of Kashmir. As a matter of fact, the socio-economic and political conditions of the Princely States were extremely bad in comparison to British India. Sardar Budh Singh, one among the prominent leaders of Kashmir freedom movement, has rightly said, "if the Indian Subcontinent under British imperialism was like a jail, the Princely States were its dark cells". It was but natural that in the past the decadent administration or misrule of a particular region or state was always replaced either through external invasion or by internal revolt. The mighty British Government granted a security to the Princes against the internal revolts as well as external aggressions. The result was that they indulged in misrule and did not take any interest in the welfare of their subjects by providing them an efficient administration.

It was only after the revolt of 1857 that the British imperialists began to take some interest in the reformation of the decadent and rotten administration of the Princely States. The historians of modern Kashmir are almost unanimous on the fact that the indifference of the Dogra rulers towards the well-being of their subjects, especially the Kashmiri Muslims, has no precedent in the history of Kashmir. Of course it was during the Dogra regime that the State was placed along modern lines by introducing modern amenities. But, it is to be borne in mind that all such changes were introduced in the State during the later phase of the Dogra rule as a result of British intervention. In order to safeguard its imperial interests and to take certain measures towards the reformation of the corrupt administration of the State a full-fledged and permanent Residency was established by the British Government of India in Srinagar as late as 1885. The establishment of this institution proved a boon to the people of the State in general and those of the Kashmiris in particular, who were the worst hit of Dogra misgovernment.

After taking over as the ruler of the State, Maharaja Gulab Singh claimed to be an absolute sovereign. Moreover, he considered the State especially the Valley of Kashmir as his purchased property. His successors also carried on both of these claims. But a thorough evaluation of the Treaty of Amritsar and the subsequent developments in the political history of Kashmir make it amply clear that he was neither an absolute sovereign nor the sole proprietor of the State. Both of these claims were most probably aimed at legitimating their policy of rack-renting and sucking the lifeblood of working classes. In order to draw a clear picture of the nature and the impact of Dogra

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rule upon the people of Kashmïr it is worthwhile to quote Prem Nath Bazaz, a veteran freedom fighter and a progressive historian of Kashmir:

> Foreign rule was not new to Kashmiris in 1846 A.C. But the Dogras were the strange foreign rulers who were themselves vassals of another mightier power which had by then brought the whole of India under its sway. Besides, the Dogras were not like those alien masters who came in the past and lived in the Valley as its permanent inhabitants. The Dogras have always considered Jammu as their home and Kashmir as the conquered country. As we shall presently see they established a sort of Dogra imperialism in the State in which the Dogras were elevated to the position of the masters and all non-Dogra communities and classes were given the humble places of inferiors. The people of the Valley were thus brought under the imperialism of the Dogras which itself was functioning as a vassal of the super-imperialism of the British. But though Dogra imperialism brought nothing but misery, thraldom, physical and mental deterioration in its wake, the other imperialism did not come without some blessings. By coming under the British suzerainty the Valley began to have the impact of Western ideas and modern civilization, which finally awakened the people to demand their birth-right of independence and freedom.

It was very late and not earlier than the twenties of the twentieth century that the signs of consciousness against the dictatorial and oppressive Dogra Raj began germinating in Kashmir. However, it was only in 1932 that this nascent awareness blossomed into the formation of the first known political organisation of Kashmir - All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, which was destined to play an important role in changing the pattern of Dogra rule. No doubt the name of the Conference was changed in 1939 to practically demonstrate the open-mindedness of the Muslim leadership and to involve all the people of the State irrespective of caste, colour and creed to fight for common issues. But the basis of this Hindu-Muslim courtship and the programme of the National Conference lay in the nature and character of Muslim Conference. Needless to mention, it is only the nomenclature of Muslim Conference which tends to create an impression of its being some communal organisation with a communal manifesto. But when we study the practical functioning of the Conference, it seems like any modern, secular and progressive organisation.

Now the question arises that when the programme of Muslim Conference was secular through and through what was the need of naming it after one particular community? If one cares to understand the sectarian character of the Dogra rule that demonstrated open bias

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in favour of its non-Muslim subjects together with the retrograde role of the non-Muslim bureaucracy, one's perplexed mind immediately sets at rest. It was not only the blatant refusal of the non-Muslims to fight against the misrule, but their avowed policy of opposing, frustrating and sabotaging the emerging political consciousness among the Muslims that made the State Muslims to brand their organisation after the name of their own community.

So far many scholarly works have been written on the freedom movement of Kashmir but no in-depth study has been made to probe into the causes that accounted for the rise of political consciousness among the Muslims of Kashmir and the choice of the non-Muslims to opt out of the struggle. Further, the role of Muslim Conference has not been highlighted. It is important to mention that unless the social, political and economic programme of the Muslim Conference and the struggle it launched to achieve its desired goals are properly understood, one cannot be able to understand the subsequent developments that took place in the political history of Kashmir after 1938.

A very significant development of far-reaching consequences took place in 1939 when Muslim Conference was converted into National Conference with the object of removing the barricades that had apparently hindered the entry of non-Muslims into the struggle for freedom. Although this was a very crucial development, which had a profound bearing on the subsequent history of Kashmir, no in-depth study has been made to examine the causes that accounted for this development. Also, no serious study has been done to examine the extent to which the dream of forming a common platform for launching a joint struggle against the Dogra rule was realized.

Prem Nath Bazaz's classic work 'The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir' is more a source than history, written critically by a contemporary politician. This is evident from the contents of this work that smack of deep antipathy against the National Conference. Moreover, the learned author has not thrown any light on the role of Muslim Conference (1932-1938). Instead, he has undermined its role by writing that, "its history is nothing but the record of the struggle of the middle and upper class Muslims for the achievement of their class rights". This is, as we shall see in the present work, a gross misrepresentation of facts. No doubt the work under reference is a primary source as Bazaz was a versatile leader of Kashmir freedom movement and perhaps the only leader among his contemporaries who possessed a deep historical sense, but, while reading him we

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have to act upon the advice of E.H. Car, "study the historian before you begin to study the facts".

'Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom' by Muhammad Yusuf Saraf is a narration of events, written by a non-professional who has mainly relied upon easily accessible sources for the early period of Dogra rule. Yet the work is a primary source for the scholars of Kashmir freedom movement as the author was intimately associated with the freedom struggle.

Ghulam Hassan Khan's 'Freedom Movement in Kashmir' is more a summary of the political developments of the period than to call it a history. After all Professor Khan was a political scientist, who has written this work from the standpoint of his own discipline.

Professor Fida Muhammad Hassnain's 'Freedom Struggle in Kashmir' has given a superficial treatment to the subject. The scholar has focused on different historical events of the freedom movement without placing them in the context.

Abdul Rashid Tasir's 'Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir' is a narrative of the Kashmir freedom movement, written by a contemporary journalist.

Considering the above shortcomings of the modern works on the freedom movement of Kashmir, the justification for rewriting the history of this important problem of Kashmir history needs no emphasis.

A few words about the sources seem pertinent. The contemporary evidence is abundantly available in official documents, resolutions of the Muslim Conference, biographies and autobiographies, personal diaries, newspapers, official correspondences, histories of the period and the poetic literature – both individual as well as folk. Above all the most important kind of source of our information is the living elders who have been contemporaries of the period of our study. It had been my endeavour to take as much benefit from these precious sources on the modern history of Kashmir as I could during the period of my research.

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Genesis of Political Consciousness

The first three years of the thirties of the twentieth century form a landmark in the history of modern Kashmir. It was during these years that a growing concern developed among the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir to launch an organised struggle against the Dogra rule. This concern ultimately concretized in the formation of the first ever-known political organisation of Kashmir – All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, which received the formal approval of the Jammu and Kashmir leadership on 16 October 1932. Why did the Muslims of the State alone think of launching a struggle against the policies of the State when the non-Muslims formed a substantial portion of the population of Jammu and Kashmir? And why did the non-Muslims not only remain aloof from it, but also took every step to frustrate any such move which was aimed at forcing the Maharaja to change his policies?[1] These are the questions, which immediately strike one's mind. However, these questions cannot be satisfactorily answered unless one makes a thorough probing of the Dogra rule and understands its character. It is, therefore, not for nothing that in this chapter we have proposed to give details about all those factors which alienated the Muslim community of Kashmir from the Dogra rule and prepared it to make no boons in offering sacrifices to force the Maharaja to change his policies.

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1 For details see supra, pp.118-119.

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a. Nature of the State

> It was on the lips of every tax payer that the rule of *dharma* meant the pillage of the country.
>
> (Hamidullah Shahbadi)

The Treaty of Amritsar[2], by virtue of which Jammu and Kashmir State was handed over to Maharaja Gulab Singh and his male descendants with an 'independent' authority over the internal affairs of the State, maintained the dynastic, feudal, ruler-centred and religion-centred rule of the medieval ages. This presents a contrast to the overall milieu of British India, which under the impact of the British policies saw a period of transition from medieval to modern age.

The Treaty of Amritsar was not an exception to the general policy according to which the Government of India conducted its relations with other native States of India at that time. During this period the relations between the native States and the British Indian Government were conducted under the Policy of Subordinate Isolation (1813-1858).[3] This policy had two important features. First, the foreign policy of these States was subordinated to British paramountcy in order to avoid any possible threat of the emergence of a united front on behalf of the Princes against the British authority. Second, the rulers of these States were given a free hand in their internal affairs.[4] Not only this, they were also assured of protection against the 'internal revolts' and external aggressions.

Throughout the course of history a corrupt and decadent rule was replaced either by the challenges of internal revolt or external aggression. The British imperialism freed the Princes from both of these dangers and the result was that they indulged in gross misgovernment. The policy of Subordinate Isolation was changed in 1858 as a result of the revolt of 1857. It was after the revolt that the British Government began to take some interest to reform the rotten and corrupt administration of the States. In order to safeguard the imperial interest and to make some effort towards the administrative reform of the State, a full-fledged British Residency was established in Srinagar as late as 25 September 1885. It was after its establishment

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2 For details about the Treaty see K.M. Pannikar, *Gulab Singh – 1792-1858 – Founder of Kashmir*, p.112

3 K.V. Punniah, *The Constitutional History of India*, p.288.

4 Ibid.

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and the subsequent intervention of the Residents that some positive changes were introduced in the administration of the State.

Though Maharaja Gulab Singh was apparently on good terms with the British, he was at heart dead against any Western penetration in Kashmir. A special order was issued in 1854 by the Governor General Lord Dalhousie, at the request of Maharaja Gulab Singh, forbidding European visitors to remain in Kashmir during the winter. He established a rule that Europeans were to be admitted to Srinagar by prescribed routes only, and from the time of their entrance to their exit they were to be under vigilant supervision and were not to be allowed to mix with the people.[5] Guesthouses were built outside the main city for the convenience of European visitors and a special quarter in the environs of Srinagar was set apart from them. Agents were appointed to look after their requirements and all business was transacted through a *babu,* deputed for the purpose.[6] This policy of the Maharaja continued till 1872.[7]

The understandable fears of Maharaja Gulab Singh, his officials and his land grantees prompted the policy of isolating the Britishers. He did not want that the tourists and missionaries should carry to the British India details of the treatment of the people,[8] in whose welfare he showed very little interest.[9] To the British, he owed his throne and he feared their interference, should his manner of rule become known.

For a long period the State remained apathetic to providing basic medical and educational facilities to its subjects. It also remained hostile towards the Christian missionaries – the pioneers of modern medical and educational amenities in Kashmir.[10] It was after facing stiff opposition from the State that Robert Clark succeeded in opening a

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5 Martyn Clark, *Robert Clark of the Punjab,* p.190.

6 Ibid., p.191; Davidge, *Travellers Companion and Guide to Kashmir,* p.25.

7 Mohammad Ishaq.Khan, *History of Srinagar,* p.128.

8 See Augene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: its Environment, its Men and its Work,* vol.II, p.575.

9 *NAI*/Foreign, see Jan. 28, 1848, No's. 41-42; Despatch to Secret Committee (MS.), Foreign, Jan. 22, 1848, See No.10.

10 For details about the pioneering efforts of the Christian missionaries in health and educational services of Kashmir see Mohammad Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar,* pp.128-129.

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school at Srinagar on 18 April 1864.[11] Such parents who sent their children to the missionary school received domiciliary visits from the police.[12] They were told that if their children went to school they would be banished to Gilgit.[13] Similarly Dr. Elmslie, the designated doctor to the Kashmir Medical Mission, was not allowed to have a roomy house for performing his duties. "His life was hard and difficult", writes Mr.Biscoe, "for he had no hospital, his operations being performed under the trees; also orders were issued that the people were not to visit the doctor, and sepoys were stationed around to keep them away, as the sick persisted in coming for relief. Several patients suffered imprisonment for disobeying the order of the authorities".[14]

Robert Thorp was the first foreigner who had sacrificed his life for the freedom of Kashmir from the clutches of the Dogra regime. He had come to Kashmir to see the birthplace of his mother. But when he reached this land he found misery all round. He found that the Kashmiris were leading a life of ignorance, slavery and degradation. He felt that British had done a great injustice to the Kashmiris by selling them to the Dogra Maharaja. He was the first Britisher to have openly accepted this fact:[15]

> For purposes entirely selfish, we deliberately sold millions of human beings into the absolute power of one of the meanest, most avaricious, cruel and unprincipled of men that ever sat upon a throne.

When he saw that the Maharaja had pursued a system of oppression and misrule, he started writing articles in various British papers. Despite his being a British national, he criticized the

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11 Martyn Clark, *Robert Clark of the Punjab*, p.213.

12 Robert Clark, *The Missions of C.M.S. and C.E.Z.M.S. in the Punjab and Sindh*, p.169.

13 Ibid. It is pertinent to mention that the people belonging to working classes especially the peasants were made to carry various types of loads on their backs for the maintenance of the armies at Gilgit border without any remuneration. The practice was known as Gilgit *begar* (forced labour).

14 Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p.240; Robert Clark, *The Missions of C.M.S. and C.E.Z.M.S. in the Punjab and Sindh*, pp.170-171; Arthur Brinckman, *Wrongs of Kashmir*, pp.7 and 18.

15 Robert Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment* (Edited and recast by F.M. Hassnian), pp.16-17.

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Government of England for bringing all this misery to the people of Kashmir. As Kashmir was his motherland he did not tolerate injustice and atrocities being committed on the Kashmiris.[16] He desired the setting up of a commission of enquiry against the Maharaja for his crimes against the people of Kashmir. For raising his voice in favour of the oppressed people he was externed from Kashmir. But he refused to oblige and returned again to fight against the misgovernment in Kashmir. He had gone to visit the hill known as Takht-i-Suliman near the Dal-lake in Srinagar, and the murderers employed by the Maharaja descended upon him, which resulted in the death of this brave and courageous man on 22 November 1868.[17]

The most crucial consequence that followed the Treaty of Amritsar was that it caused devastating effects upon the majority community of Kashmir i.e. Muslims. "The sale-deed of 1846", writes P.L. Lakhanpal, "put a largely populated Muslim State under the Dogra rule which had been characterized as despotic, tyrannical and sectarian".[18] Taking advantage of the so-called sale-deed of Kashmir, the Dogra Maharajas considered Kashmir as their purchased property[19] and ruled over their subjects as a master rules over his slaves. To perpetuate their rule they, on the one hand, opted for autocratic type of Government, wherein the people had no right to express their grievances and on the other hand, created a supporting structure by pampering their co-religionists even at the cost of the basic aspirations and tender feelings of the majority Muslim population. On the whole,

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16 Ibid., p.17

17 Ibid., pp.17-18.

18 P. L. Lakhanpal, *Essential Documents and Notes on Kashmir Dispute*, 2nd Edition, p.16.

19 Robert Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, p.26; Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chināar* (autobiography), p.34. The Dogra propaganda that Kashmir was their purchased property gained so much currency among the people that even the famous contemporary poet Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal considered Kashmir to had been sold to Maharaja Gulab Singh, and he lamented over it in these verses:

O breeze, if thy happen to go Geneva way,
Carry a word to the nations of the world,
Their fields, their crops, their streams,
Even the peasants in the vale,
They sold, they sold all, alas!
How cheap was the sale.

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the policy of the Dogra rulers had a strong bias against the Muslims of both middle and lower classes.[20]

The Dogra rulers openly demonstrated their communal stance when they signalled their rule by wholesale revoking of *jagirs* and *inam* grants enjoyed by Muslims and transferred the same to their co-religionists.[21] According to Dr. Elmslie, who spent eight years in Kashmir (1865-1872), there were forty-five *jagirs* in the Valley, of which the Muslims enjoyed only five, whereas the rest belonged to the Hindu community.[22] The transfer of *jagirs* from Muslim to non-Muslim subjects remained a dominant feature of the Dogra rule. Maharaja Hari Singh, (1925-1947) who was considered to be an 'enlightened' ruler in comparison to his forefathers, was also not free from religious bias. While mentioning the transfer of *jagirs* from Muslims to non-Muslims during his reign, *Inqilab,* an Urdu daily from Lahore in its issue of 20 November 1931 writes: [23]

> Right from the coronation of Maharaja Hari Singh upto the present time about twenty Kashmiris were deprived of their *jagirs* which valued from Rs. 5,000 to 10,000 each. These *jagirs* were offered to other twenty persons among whom 18 were Hindu Rajputs and the rest two belonged to Muslim community.

While on the one hand, the Maharajas confiscated the rent-free grants enjoyed by the Muslim religious persons and institutions,[24] on the other, they established the Dharmarth Trust to which they endowed huge amount of revenue for the promotion of Hinduism.[25] To add insult to injury, Muslims were subjected to pay taxes known as *mandri* and *ashgal.*[26] The former was meant for the maintenance of temples and latter for the support of Hindu priests.[27]

Though the Muslims constituted 80% of the total population of the State, their share in Government services was simply nominal.[28]

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20 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.108.

21 *JKA*, File No: 117 of 1986 (Samvat).

22 Bates, *Gazetteer of Kashmir*, pp.29-30.

23 *Inqilab*, Lahore, November, 1931.

24 *JKA*, File No: 117 of 1986 (Samvat).

25 Ibid.

26 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.416; Bates, *Gazetteer of Kashmir*, p.102.

27 Ibid.

28 Census of India, I, 1931, pp.73-74.

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Even as late as 1931 one finds that the share of the Muslims in the State services was not more than 15 per cent.[29] Gawasha Lal Ḳoul, though being well disposed towards the Maharajas, remarks, "Maharaja Pratab Singh would say, don't give too much to Rajputs, use Kashmiri Pandits as much as you can and see that the Muslims do not starve".[30] No doubt there were poor among the Hindus and Sikhs as well, but the Muslims suffered the worse.[31] The revenue department that had dealings with the Muslim masses was from top to bottom monopolized by the non-Muslims.[32] The non-Muslim officials not only mal-treated the Muslim masses but also fatted themselves on illegal exactions known as *nazrana* and *rasum* imposed on the Muslim peasantry.[33]

The Maharajas also encouraged the contractors belonging to their own community and completely ignored the interests of the local aspirants. It is interesting to note that they invited the Hindu contractors from outside the State,[34] and offered them contracts even at the cost of the State exchequer.[35] Not only this, huge sums of money were loaned to them.[36] The 15 October 1931 issue of the *Inqilab* writes that three lakh rupees were loaned to Baghat Singh, Sukh Dayal Singh and Amir Chand – the three contractors from Rawalpindi, for developing the Silk Industry, though there was no scarcity of Muslim contractors to accomplish this work.[37] The State policy of pampering the non-local non-Muslim contractors was a great factor that nursed resentment among the local Muslims. It can be gauged from the fact that the demand to abolish this practice figured in the memorandum submitted

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29 Riots Enquiry Committee Report, pp.205-206.

30 Gawasha Lal Koul, *Kashmir Through the Ages*, p.122.

31 Ibid., p.21.

32 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.400-401; Glancy Commission Report vide Mirza Shafiq Hussain, *Kashmiri Mussalmanon Ki Siyasi Jadujahad, 1931-1939, Muntakhib Dastawaizāt*, (Hereafter Dastawaizāt) pp.110-111.

33 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.415

34 *Ranbir*, Weekly, Jammu, 4 Katak, 1981 (Samvat); A.R. of Jammu and Kashmir Government 1924-1925, p.27; Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*, pp.124-125.

35 Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*, pp.124-125.

36 Ibid.

37 *Inqilab*, Lahore, October 15, 1931.

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by some prominent Muslim representatives of Kashmir, on behalf of the local Muslims, to Indian Viceroy, Lord Reading in 1924.[38]

> The Government contracts, particularly those relating to forests, roads and construction should be granted to the State nationals in general and to the Muslims in particular.

The taxation policy of the State was discriminatory which hit hard the Muslim subjects particularly those of Kashmir. To quote Dr. Elmslie:[39]

> Most of the oppressive restrictions and taxes are only imposed within the limits of the Valley. Hindus being the ruling class were exempted from the burden which pressed heavily on the Muslims.

The Muslims had not only to pay *mandri* and *ashgal* but they had to pay marriage tax known as *sathrashahi*[40] also. Added to this, the Hindu subjects were totally exempted from the notorious exaction of *begar* (forced labour) and the whole brunt of it fell exclusively upon the Muslims especially the peasantry.[41] It is also to be noted that the Kashmiri Muslim peasantry was deprived of *haquq-i-malikana* (proprietary rights) whereas the same rights were enjoyed by the peasantry of Jammu province.[42]

There were two ill-famed centres of prostitution in Srinagar e.g. Tashwan and Maisuma. The sale of young girls in Kashmir to established houses of ill-fame in Srinagar and India was protected and encouraged by the Dogra rulers.[43] According to Robert Thorp the licence granting permission for the purchase of a girl for this purpose cost about 100 *chilkee* rupees in Ranbir Singh's time.[44] The traveller lamented that such sales took place because the very poorest and lowest

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38 From Muslim Public to Lord Reading, Governor General of India, October 1924, *JKA*, File No:524/F/62 of 1924.

39 Bates, *Gazetteer of Kashmir*, p.102.

40 Bates, *Gazetteer of Kashmir*, p.102; Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.154.

41 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.412; Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*, pp.136-137; Robert Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, p.38; Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.141-142.

42 Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.

43 Robert Thorp, *Cashmere Misgovernment*, Chapter IV, (typed copy in the State Archives, Srinagar), p.35.

44 Ibid.

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classes of the people sold their children.[45] In 1880, the Maharaja received from fifteen to twenty-five per cent of the whole revenue of his State from the gains of his licensed prostitutes.[46] In 1880 there were 18,715 State prostitutes in Kashmir.[47]

The State not only discriminated against the Muslims on economic front but what proved more crucial was that it also interferred with their religious liberties. Without caring for the religious susceptibilities of the Muslims, the Government confiscated many religious places of Muslims namely Khanqah-i-Sokhta, Khanqah-i-Bulbul Shah, Khanqah-i-Dara-Shikoh, Pathar Masjid (Srinagar), Malashah-i-Bagh Mosque (Ganderbal), Khanqah-i-Sofi Shah (Jammu), Bhu Mosque (Jammu) and the Srinagar Eid-Gah.[48] The rulers added insult to the injury when they converted some confiscated Muslim shrines and mosques into store houses for grains and ammunition.[49] In addition to this, the State confiscated some graveyards of the Muslims and the property of their religious places and transferred the same to non-Muslims.[50] The restoration of confiscated mosques, shrines and graveyards to the Muslims figured among the important demands which the Kashmiri Muslim leadership made to the Government through the memorandum submitted to Lord Reading in 1924. The demand reads as:[51]

> The mosques and other religious properties, which are in possession of the Government to be immediately restored and steps be taken to ensure that Muslim religious places and graveyards remain protected from future encroachment by non-Muslims.

The religious fanaticism of the Dogra rulers is no less demonstrated in their attempts to replace the Muslim names of some localities of Kashmir by the Hindu nomenclatures. Maharaja Ranbir Singh, it is significant to note, changed the name of Islamabad (a

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45 Ibid.

46 *NAI*/Foreign, See E, Mar. 1883, No.86.

47 Ibid.

48 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.89-90.

49 Robert Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, p.38.

50 Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.

51 Memorandum submitted by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading, the Governor General of India, on his visit to the Valley in 1924.

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famous town of Kashmir) as Anantnag.[52] Similarly Takht-i-Suliman (a mount at Dalgate in Srinagar) was renamed by him as Shankar Acharya.[53] Khawaja Ghulam Hassan Nizami, a prominent Punjabi Muslim, who had several meetings with Pratab Singh (1885-1925) regarding the restoration of the rights of the Muslims in the State, says, "Maharaja Pratab Singh was such an orthodox Hindu that he did not like even to see the face of a Muslim from morning till afternoon".[54] It is also said that he did not tolerate even the shade of a Muslim over his drinking water. And if by chance the shade of any Muslim would fall upon it, he was imprisoned and punished.[55]

The Muslims, whom their religion enjoins to eat beef and who in the face of recurrent food famines (of which they were the main targets)[56] had no alternative but to slaughter their indispensable property namely an ox or a cow, to feed their starving families, were forbidden to do so and whosoever was found 'guilty' of slaughtering an ox, a cow or a buffalo was awarded capital punishment or sentenced to rigorous imprisonment.[57] The 'crime' of killing a cow, an ox or a buffalo was commonly known as *hathai* (a degenerated term of the Sanskrit word *hathya*). During the initial phase of the Dogra regime *hathai* was awarded death sentence.[58] But subsequently the punishment was first reduced to life imprisonment and then to seven years rigorous imprisonment.[59] Writing about the Muslim

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52 G. M. D. Sofi, *Kashir*, p.570.

53 Mohmad Sultan Pampori, *Kashmir in Chains*, p.52.

54 *Inqilab*, Lahore, July 1, 1931.

55 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.67.

56 Pandit J. L. Kilam writes that a terrible famine broke out in the Valley in 1876 which took away heavy toll of lives. But the sufferings of the Kashmiri Pandits were not so much as those of the Muslims; J. L. Kilam, *History of Kashmiri Pandits*, p.27. Walter Lawrence substantiates the fact by adding that the Muslims attributed the Pandits immunity to the fact that they were a privileged class, whose official power enabled them to seize all available grain. Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.215.

57 Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, p.115; Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.143; Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.183. According to one estimate 8,000 people had suffered imprisonment for their involvement in cow slaughter between 1846 and 1930. See *Inqilab*, Lahore, October 12, 1930.

58 Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, p.115.

59 Robert Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, p.39.

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victims of the draconian 'cow slaughter' law E. F. Knight, who visited the Valley in 1891, writes:[60]

> Until recently the killing of that sacred animal was punishable with death. Imprisonment for life is now penalty, and many an unfortunate Muhammadan, I believe, is lying immured in Hari Parbat because in that time of famine he has ventured to kill his own ox to save himself and his family from starvation.

We find that apart from imprisonment, severe fines were imposed upon the people who were suspected to be involved in cow slaughter.[61] Even sometimes the Dogra police burned some localities, wherein it was understood that *hathai* was committed, to ashes. Chakpath (a village near modern Anantnag) is still commemorative of the destruction caused by the Dogra police to those inhabitations whose inhabitants were found involved in slaughter of cows, oxen or buffaloes.[62]

It may not be beside the point to mention that *hathai* – a generic term for the offence of killing cow, ox or buffalo – has become a classic term in Kashmir for an unpardonable offence. If some one even today wants to convey that he has not done any heinous crime, he would say that "he has not committed *hathai*".[63] The fact that the Kashmiri Muslims of Srinagar and some other leading towns of the Valley are not generally beef-eaters has to be understood in the background of the harsh punishment, which the Dogras awarded to them. After all, in comparison to the remote villages, the cities and towns were more under the surveillance of the law and order machinery. Otherwise, Srinagar city was the first place in Kashmir where there was a full-fledged cow slaughter market in medieval times, and according to a sixteenth century Brahmin chronicler, Suka, one thousand cows were used to be slaughtered in Srinagar everyday.[64]

It is strange that even the slaughter of sheep and goats was prohibited during the sacred festive days of the Hindus, which

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60 Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, p.115.

61 Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*, p.142.

62 An interview with the contemporaries of village Chakpath, Anantnag, February 1998.

63 It should be remembered that the term *hathai* is not used by the common Kashmiris as murder of a person as it is understood among the Hindi speaking people of today.

64 J.C. Dutt, *Raj-Tarangni* (Eng. Tr.), vol.III, p.421.

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numbered about sixty days in a year.[65] The Muslims considered this prohibition as a serious interference in their religious freedom and consequently they complained against it before the Glancy Commission (1931-32).[66] Even after the acceptance of the recommendations of Glancy Commission by Maharaja Hari Singh on 10 April 1932, no butcher could open his shop on four days viz. Ram Navami, Janam Ashtami, birthday of Maharaja and the birthday of the heir-apparent.[67] It is also worth noticing that in the dominion of Maharaja nobody could cut the pipal tree or cut its branches because it was considered sacred by the Hindus.[68]

The Dogras demonstrated their bias when they promulgated a law according to which if any Muslim would embrace Hinduism he was within his rights to inherit property and enjoy guardianship over his children, whereas in case a Hindu became a Muslim, he was deprived of all such rights.[69] This discriminatory attitude of the State against the Muslim community of Kashmir considerably boiled the blood of the Muslims which is amply clear by the fact that it was one of the main grievances of the Muslim community which they submitted to Maharaja Hari Singh through a memorandum in 1931 and repeatedly asked for its abrogation in the annual sessions of the Muslim Conference. To quote the memorandum:[70]

> As a proof of the fact that the Muslim subjects of your Highness will in future be treated fairly, a declaration may kindly be made immediately to the effect that there would be complete religious freedom in the State and that conversion would entail no confiscation of property in favour of relatives as is the practice at present. Your Highness, who, we believe fully recognizes the value of religious liberty and tolerance, will agree that there is no justification for a person to be deprived of his property on his conversion to another religion, for it amounts to religious

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65 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.154.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 The abrogation of this law was one of the foremost demands of the Kashmiri Muslim leadership. See Glancy Commission Report vide, *Dastawaizāt*, pp.92-93; Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, pp.143-144.

70 Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.

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> interference and in the presence of such practice, your Highness, Muslim subjects cannot have any sense of security in the matter of their being treated fairly.

While the Muslims were reeling under the religious fanaticism of their rulers, the community had at the same time no channel to voice its grievances. The State did not even tolerate the submission of memorandums. It may be noted that when it came to know of the memorandum submitted secretly by some prominent Muslim citizens of Kashmir to Lord Reading in 1924, regarding the redressal of their religious and economic grievances, it persecuted all of them.[71] Khawaja Sad-ud-Din Shawl was exiled and the *jagir* of Hassan Shah Naqeshbandi was confiscated. The two Mirwaizes were let off with a warning; but all official privileges enjoyed by them were immediately withdrawn. Khawaja Nur Shah Naqeshbandi was forced to resign from the post of Tahsildar and Agha Sayyid Hussain Shah Jalali was dismissed from Zaildari and his *jagir* was also confiscated.[72] When in 1931 the Maharaja, under the pressure of 13 July 1931 incident, asked the Kashmiri Muslims to submit their grievances in writing, the demand for right of expression and formation of *anjumans* (associations) figured prominently in the list of demands:[73]

> Your Highness's subjects most respectfully submit that no permanent peace is possible unless the same law be enforced in the State for freedom of press, freedom of speech and for the establishment of *anjumans* (associations) as obtains in British India. As matters stand, we are deprived of all the ways and means of intellectual and economic progress. Our wisemen are unable to benefit the people by their wisdom, and our masses cannot improve their condition without organisation.

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71 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, pp.137-138; Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.34-35; Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir*, vol.I, pp.71-72. The prominent among them include: Khawaja Sad-ud-Din Shawl, Khawaja Maqbool Pandit, Khawaja Nur Shah Naqeshbandi, Khawaja Hassan Shah Naqeshbandi *(jagirdar)*, Mirwaiz Kashmir Moulvi Ahmad Ullah Hamadani, Agha Sayyid Hussain Shah Jalali, Khawaja Hassan Shah and Mufti Sharif-ud-Din.

72 Riots Enquiry Committee Report, witness of Pirzada Ghulam Rasool, Headmaster Islamia High School, Srinagar, before the Riots Enquiry Committee, July 1931, p.193.

73 Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.

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In late twenties of the twentieth century Muhammad-ud-Din Fauq, an eminent journalist of Punjab expressed a desire to bring out a daily in Kashmir. But instead of permitting him to do so, the Maharaja forwarded his application to the Prime Minister with the remark that such applications should not be entertained at all.[74] The State did not allow the visit of a Muslim deputation led by Nawab of Dacca, Sayyid Mohsin Shah, to Kashmir whose aim was to plead for the amelioration of the conditions of Muslims by personally meeting the Maharaja of the time.[75] Sir Albion Banerji, the Foreign and Political Minister of Kashmir, was so much disgusted with this state of affairs that he resigned from his portfolio and explained the reason of his resignation before a press conference at Lahore on 15 March 1929, which highlights the nature of Dogra autocracy:[76]

> Jammu and Kashmir State is labouring under many disadvantages, with a large number of Muhammadan population absolutely illiterate, labouring under poverty and very low economic conditions of living in the villages and practically governed like dumb driven cattle. There is no touch between the Government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances and the administrative machinery itself requires overhauling from top to bottom to bring it upto the modern conditions of efficiency. It has at present little or no sympathy with the people's wants and grievances.
>
> There is hardly any public opinion in the State. As regards the press it is practically non-existent with the result that the Government is not benefited to the extent that it should be, by the impact of healthy criticism.

To be sure, one cannot dispute with the term Dharm Raj which the rulers and their non-Muslim subjects assigned to the Dogra rule. Dharm Raj meant pro-Hindu rule having no regards for the genuine rights and sentiments of other religions and religious communities. The pro-Hindu policy of the Dogra rule is also clear from the fact that as late as nineteen forties Sir B. N. Rao, the Premier of the State, in a press conference at Jammu declared publically that Jammu and

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74 *JKA*, (G.R.) 117 of 1927.

75 Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*, p.141.

76 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, pp. 140-141.

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Kashmir was a Hindu State.[77] It is further substantiated by the fact that between 1846 and 1947 about twenty-eight persons were appointed as Prime Ministers of Jammu and Kashmir State but none of them was a Muslim.[78]

Before concluding this account it is worthwhile to quote the observations of a contemporary politician and historian, Prem Nath Bazaz on the nature of the Dogra Raj[79]:

> Speaking generally and from the bourgeois point of view, the Dogra rule has been a Hindu Raj. Muslims have not been treated fairly by which I mean as fairly as the Hindus. Firstly, because contrary to all professions of treating all classes equally, it must be candidly admitted that Muslims were dealt with harshly in certain respects only because they were Muslims.

b. Composition and attitudes of Bureaucracy

> Whenever the Forest Guard and Forester come to me for bribe and if I shall not pay the hush money to them, they will complain to Range Officer. Hence even the firewood of my domesticated tree (willow) will be declared as State property.
>
> (Abdul Ahad Azād)

Grievances against the Dogra Raj were many, but the most crucial one that created a strong resentment among the masses, in general, and the sensitive and vocal section of Muslim population – educated youth, in particular, was the recruitment policy of the Government in State services and the rapacious and communal dispositions of the bureaucracy. In this sub-chapter we shall examine the complaints persistently made by the Kashmiri Muslims against the recruitment policy of the State. We will also see with the help of statistical data furnished by different varieties of contemporary sources as to how far the Muslims were justified in their pleadings. Further, the role of bureaucracy in fuelling the discontentment of Kashmiri Muslims will also be examined.

During the initial phase of the Dogra rule, the Maharaja handed over all the key positions to non-local Hindus[80] and appointed local Pandits on

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77 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight- For Freedom*, vol. I, pp.593-594.

78 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.431. Throughout the whole course of Dogra regime only one Kashmiri was appointed as Prime Minister and it was none other than Ram Chandra Kak – a Kashmiri pandit.

79 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.250.

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clerical positions.[81] To one's utter dismay, in 1872 one does not find even a single Muslim out of a population of 327700 Kashmiri Muslims occupying even a lowest position in State services, whereas out of 75000 population of Kashmiri Pandits 5572 were working as clerks.[82] With the passage of time the local Pandits rose to high positions, especially in the Revenue Department. In 1890 one finds all the positions of Revenue Department from village Patwari to Wazir-i-Wazarat (Deputy Commissioner) being monopolized by the Kashmiri Pandits. In this context it is revealing to quote Walter Lawrence:[83]

> In Kashmir the revenue administration proceeds from the *patwari*, the village accountant, and he is a Pandit... Over the patwaris was a small band of Pandits, who were employed in the tahsil in various revenue capacities... Over the *patwari* and tahsil Pandits was a tahsildar and one or two naib-tahsildars, mostly Pandits. There were fifteen tahsils, and these tahsils were divided into three districts or *wazarats*, which were presided over by the officers known as *wazir wazarats*, all of whom were Pandits.

The poor representation of Muslims in the State apparatus even in 1923-24 is borne out by the following information recorded in the 7 and 8 November 1923 issues of *Siyasat*, published from Lahore:[84]

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80 Younghusband, *Kashmir*, p.186.

81 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.83.

82 Dr. Elmslie vide Bates *Gazetteer of Kashmir*, p.29.

83 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.400-401. Some of the pandits enjoyed key positions in the Dogra Government. Pandit Rajkak Dhar was the officer incharge of *Daghshali*, (the department that regulated the *shawl* trade) Raja Suraj Koul was Revenue Minister for State Council, Pandit Radha Krishan Koul was Judicial Minister, Pandit Zanakak Dhar was Deputy Governor, Pandit Shivkak Dhar was Wazir-i-Wazarat of Kishtwar and Pandit Ramju Dhar was Diwan-i-Mal. Pandit Vidhlal Dhar, Raja Sir Daya Krishan Koul were private secretaries to His Highness. Pandit Wasa Kak Dhar, Pandit Ram Joo Mattu and Pandit Prakash Joo Zutshi were Wazir-i-Wazarats. Diwan Badri Nath, Janki Prashad. Pandit Manmohan Nath Koul and Manmohan Lal held the posts of the Governor of Kashmir, respectively. There were many other Pandits who were treasurers, conservators of forests and held many other places of prominence. Rachna Puri, *The Pandit Community of Kashmir – A Historical Analysis, 1819-1947* (unpublished M.Phil. thesis) Department of History, University of Kashmir, p.65.

84 *Siyasat*, Lahore, November 7 and 8, 1923.

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> There is no Muslim representation in the Department of Hunting Defence, Scientific Research, Libraries, Archaeology, Museum, Mining, Agriculture, Accounts, Dharmarth, Roadcess, Custodian and Irrigation. Among 16 Courtiers of Maharaja there is not even a single Muslim. Out of 205 Military Officers there are only 36 Muslims. Among 205 Military Assistant Surgeons there is one Muslim only. Among 27 Forest Officials the number of Muslims is only 2. In the Department of Irrigation and Permit the number of Hindus is 17 and those of Muslims one. In the Revenue Department the number of Hindus is 112 and Muslims 27. Similarly in the Department of Health the number of doctors is 28 among which there are only 2 Muslims. In the Department of Education the number of Inspectors and Headmasters is 17 in which there are only 3 Muslims. In the two Colleges of Srinagar and Jammu the number of Professors is 33 in which the number of Muslims is only 3. Likewise in the Department of Sericulture the number of gazetted officers is 45 in which only 4 belong to Muslim community.

With the famous memorandum of 1924 the memorialists attached a statement prepared on the basis of the civil list showing extremely inadequate representation of the Muslim community in Government services. According to this statement, the number of non-Muslim gazetted officers in Kashmir Valley was 421, who drew as pay, a sum of Rs.16,50,114. However, the number of gazetted officers belonging to Muslim community was hardly 55 whose pay amounted to Rs.1,47,325.[85] It may be noted that the majority of these Muslim officers were outsiders, who hardly enjoyed any formidable say in Government affairs. To substantiate the fact that these Muslim officers were just pawns with no say, it is worth to quote Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah:[86]

> No doubt there were some non-Kashmiri Muslim officials of higher rank in the administration of Maharaja Hari Singh but they could not decide the matters on their own choice. I applied for scholarship and my application was forwarded to Education Minister for his consideration. The Minister concerned namely Agha Sayyid Hussain Razvi called me to his office and expressed his helplessness in sanctioning the scholarship. While explaining his position in the State apparatus, he told me that his example was like that of a gramaphone machine.

During the reign of Maharaja Pratab Singh (1885-1925), the administration was reorganised on modern lines, necessitating the manpower well versed with new skills of administration. Therefore, the

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85 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.34.

86 Ibid., p.20.

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rulers once again embarked on the policy of importing officials from outside Kashmir.[87] This created a strong resentment among Kashmiris especially the Kashmiri Pandits who constituted official class of the Kashmir society.[88] It was in response to an agitation launched by them that in 1927 a law defining the term *State Subject* was passed according to which preference in State services was to be given to the State subjects.[89] This positive response of the State to the demand 'Kashmir for Kashmiris', however, did not make any difference to Kashmiri Muslims. The following tables would clearly bring out the policy of discrimination adopted by the Dogra Maharajas against the overwhelmingly dominant Muslim population of Kashmir in State services:

TABLE -I Creedwise Representation of Gazetted Positions in Various State Departments

S.No.	Department	Hindus	Muslims
1	State Department	3	-
2	Personal Department	7	2
3	Military Secretary's Department	18	-
4	Foreign and Political Secretariat	2	1
5	Games, Fisheries, Visitors Bureau	2	1
6	Police Department	35	5
7	Municipalities	4	1
8	Sanitary Department	61	13
9	Dharmarth Department	2	-
10	Roadcess Fund	1	-
11	Co-operative Department	3	3
12	Civil Veterinary Department	-	2
13	Agriculture and Horticulture	4	2
14	Census Department	2	1
15	Public Works Department	18	-
16	Irrigation Department	10	-
17	Electric Department	4	-
18	Telephone and Telegraph	1	-
19	Home Secretariat	3	-
20	Medical and Jails	26	4
21	Finance and Development Secretariat	1	-
22	Accounts, Audits, Stamps and Treasures	13	1

87 Younghusband, *Kashmir*, pp.184-185.

88 *NAI*, Foreign Department, Secret F.No:726-E, April, 1924.

89 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, pp.203-204.

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23	Customs and Excise Department	3	-
24	Industries, Mining etc.	8	-
25	Sericulture Department	8	1
26	Stationary and Press	5	-
27	Forest	35	5
28	Judicial Department	37	8
	Total	**316**	**50**

Source: *Riots Enquiry Committee Report, witness of Pirzada Ghulam Rasool, Headmaster, Islamia High School, Srinagar, July 1931, Witness No:87.*

TABLE–II: Creedwise Representation of Gazetted and Non-Gazetted Positions in Various State Departments

S.No.	Name of the Office	Hindus	Muslims
	DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE		
1	Revenue Minister	1	-
2	Secretary	-	1
3	Assistant Secretary	1	-
4	Superintendents	2	1
5	Head Clerks	8	1
6	Clerks	22	4
7	Copyists	-	1
8	Jamadars	1	-
9	Chaprasis	10	4
10	Governors	2	-
11	Assistant Governors	2	-
12	Wazir-i-Wazarats	8	2
13	Revenue Assistants	2	2
14	Naib-Tahsildars	28	10
15	Tahsildars	26	5
	Total	**113**	**31**
	DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMS		
1	Inspector General Customs	1	-
2	Superintendents	2	-
3	Deputy Inspector Class I	3	-
4	Deputy Inspector Class II	5	1
5	Deputy Inspector Class III	9	-
6	Assistant Inspectors	21	2
7	Clerks	35	-
8	Superintendent Excise (clerks)	74	16
	Total	**150**	**19**

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	DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE		
1	Chief Justice	1	-
2	Judges High Court	1	1
3	Registrar	-	1
4	Deputy Registrar	1	-
5	Session Judges	2	-
6	Additional Session Judges	2	-
7	Additional District Magistrates	2	-
8	Sub Judges	9	-
9	Munsifs	12	1
10	Government Advocates	1	-
11	Public Prosecutors	2	-
	Total	**33**	**3**
	DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH		
1	Chief Medical Officer	1	-
2	Assistant Surgeons	9	1
3	Sub Assistant Surgeons	36	5
4	Laboratory Assistant	1	-
5	Senior Compounders	2	-
6	Junior Compounders	53	4
7	Female Compounders	2	-
8	Nurses	1	-
9	Female Helpers	3	1
10	Male Helpers	38	12
11	Cooks	29	9
	Total	**175**	**32**
	DEPARTMENT OF POLICE		
1	Inspector General Police	1	-
2	Deputy Inspector General Police	1	1
3	Superintendents of Police	6	1
4	Traffic Superintendents	9	-
5	Inspector Police	17	-
6	Sub Inspector Police	40	10
7	Head Constables	143	91
8	Constables Class I	157	97
9	Ordinary Constables	426	426
	Total	**800**	**626**

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	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION		
1	Education Minister	-	1
2	Secretary Education Minister	1	-
3	Assistant Secretary	1	-
4	Director Education	1	-
5	College Principals	2	-
6	School Inspectors	2	-
7	Assistant School Inspectors	5	1
8	College Professors	29	3
9	High School Headmasters	10	1
	Total	**51**	**6**

Source: *Glancy Commission Report vide Dastawaizāt pp.110-111; Inqilab, Lahore, July 8, 1930, October 19, 1930, p.4; January 4, 1931, p.4; February 5, 1931, p.2; February 15, 1931, p.4; June 26, 1931.*

Thus, it is amply borne out that the Muslim representation in different branches of administration was nominal even in 1931-32. Between 1910 and 1930 the Muslim representation in State services did not exceed fifteen per cent both in gazetted and non-gazetted ranks.[90] Now the question arises as to how far the Muslims were justified in alleging the Government for having ignored them deliberately; and how far the State was right in defending its policy by saying that the Muslims were educationally too backward to be appointed or given adequate representation in the administration?[91]

It is to be noted that upto 1907, the administration of Kashmir was run on medieval lines and Persian continued to enjoy the position of the official language.[92] The exclusion of Kashmiri Muslims from the State administration even during this period seems nothing but a deliberate attempt on the part of the rulers to keep the Muslims away from

90 Riots Enquiry Committee Report, witness of Pirzada Ghulam Rasool, Headmaster Islamia High School, Srinagar, witness No. 87.

91 The Government justified the poor representation of the Muslims in State services on account of their backwardness in modern education. But, the Kashmiri Muslims complained that to keep them away from the State services was a part of the policy of governance. For details see Shaikh Muhammad Abudllah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.47-48.

92 *JKA*, File No: 27-Z-6 of 1967 (Samvat).

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administration,[93] especially when they, particularly those with 'noble ancestry' had a long tradition of being well versed in Persian and had mastery in the state craft. It is a fact that even during the Muslim rule the revenue administration of Kashmir was in the hands of Kashmiri Pandits,[94] but it is not true of other branches of administration, which were mostly manned by the Muslims. In 1907 Urdu as official language replaced Persian[95] and efforts were made to initiate the process of reorganizing the administration on modern lines, necessitating a human resource well versed in modern education.[96] However, there was still a majority of the posts which did not require the knowledge of English. Hence, "hundreds of Muslims well versed in Urdu and Persian could have been easily employed on these positions".[97]

It is a fact that in comparison to Hindus the Muslims of Kashmir were late to start modern education, but even when they acquired the requisite qualifications the State adopted a discriminatory attitude towards them and devised ways and means to stop their entry to the influential offices of the Government. As early as 1909, there were many Muslims who had passed their First Arts (10+2) and by 1925 one finds the number of Muslim graduates remarkably sizeable. Yet the share of Muslim representation in the State service was significantly meagre.[98]

The plea of the Government and its apologists was also questioned by the Glancy Commission (1931-32) saying that there were twelve graduates and 133 matriculates among Muslims who were

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93 Dr. Elmslie vide Bates, *Gazatteer of Kashmir*, 1980.

94 It is to be remembered that the Hindu community of Kashmir purely consisted of Brahmins, who preferred to stick to their own faith even in the face of mass conversions to Islam during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They continued to act as official class by virtue of their being experts in local administration. Even during the times of Afghans, who were considered fanatics, the Kashmiri Pandits continued to dominate the revenue department, the main wing of the State administration. See R.K. Parmu, *A History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir*, p.352.

95 *JKA*, File No: 27-Z-6 of 1967 (Samvat).

96 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.202.

97 Riots Enquiry Committee Report, witness of Pirzada Ghulam Rasool, Headmaster Islamia High School, Srinagar, witness No:87.

98 Ibid.

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unemployed when the Commission began its hearings.[99] The plight of Kashmiri Muslims can further be gleaned from the fact that even the posts of menials such as *khidmatgars* and cooks were denied to them. And even when no educational qualification had been prescribed for class 4th employees and invariably all of them were illiterate, yet the Muslim representation on such positions was less than 25 per cent. [100]

Instead of encouraging the educated Muslim youth, the Government adopted a policy of discouraging them.[101] It not only denied suitable positions to the highly educated Muslims, but also adopted very strict rules to forestall their entry into the administration once they started returning from different Indian universities with high academic qualifications. A glaring example of the State's discouragement to Muslim educated youth is the treatment meted out to Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah who inspite of being M.Sc. in Chemistry was appointed merely as a school teacher,[102] whereas only a decade earlier (1920), we find an illiterate person namely Makhan Singh holding the post of Wazir-i-Wazarat (Deputy Commissioner) of Mirpur.[103] Refuting the Government version that the under-representation of the Muslims in State services was the result of their 'educational backwardness' Pirzada Ghulam Rasool presented a written statement before the Riots Enquiry Committee in 1931, which reads as:[104]

> The principle of efficiency and merit is merely a smoke screen. To cite an example, one of the two non-Muslim Deputy Directors of Sericulture Department had studied upto the Entrance and out of six Senior Assistants three non-Muslims had no academic qualifications, whereas one Muslim graduate had been bracketed with them.

It is pertinent to mention here that when in 1930 the Education Minister recommended the name of a non-local Muslim for the post of

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99 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastáwaizāt*, p.111.

100 See infra table II.

101 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.19-20.

102 Ibid., p.65.

103 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol. I, p.293.

104 Riots Enquiry Committee Report, witness of Pirzada Ghulam Rasool, Headmaster Islamia High School, Srinagar, witness No:87.

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a college lecturer on merit basis, the State Cabinet rejected his application and instead appointed a non-Muslim with a lower merit.[105]

In 1930 the Government constituted a Civil Service Recruitment Board. Besides other objectionable rules embodied in the laws governing the recruitment policy, only those candidates were declared eligible to apply who came from 'noble families', and were not above twenty years.[106] Also, the candidates had to pass a competitive examination to qualify for appointment.[107] These conditions were on the whole against the Muslim educated youth. All of them, unlike the Kashmiri Pandits, did not come from a 'rich pedigree' and majority of them being the first generation learners were above the prescribed age limit and definitely not in a position to compete academically with the boys belonging to the educated Pandit community of Kashmir.

The malafide motives of the Government in formulating new rules can also be gauged by the fact that while in these competitive examinations Hindi and Sanskrit were given the position of optional languages Urdu, Persian and Arabic were totally deleted. And even if any Muslim candidate succeeded in overcoming these obstacles, he had no guarantee of being selected because the Government reserved the right of rejecting any candidate without giving any reasons. It is also to be noted that only 40 per cent of vacant positions were filled up through Recruitment Board whereas the Government filled remaining 60 per cent positions without referring them to the Board.[108]

To what extent did the new appointment rules account for unrest among the educated unemployed Muslims of Kashmir and forced them to think of some pressure tactics can be inferred from the following utterings of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, who became the target of the new recruitment policy of the State driving him to become one of the few outstanding architects of the Muslim Conference:[109]

> It was during these days that the Kashmir Government issued an order to constitute a Civil Service Recruitment Board with the purpose of making appointments in various services. In order to be appointed, it was necessary for a candidate to qualify a severe test.

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105 *The Kashmiri Mussalman*, weekly, Lahore, May 10, 1931.

106 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Kashmir Ka Gandhi*, p.17.

107 Ibid.

108 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i- Kashmīr*, vol.I, pp.79-80.

109 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.47-48.

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In addition to this, at the time of receiving applications educational qualifications and age of the candidates were also verified. Keeping in view our past experience with this measure of the Government, we began to doubt its efficacy. When we pondered over this decision of the Government, we find that the explanation offered by the Government earlier for the poor representation of the Muslims in State services was 'the non-availability of educated Muslims'; but when it found that there was a good number of educated Muslims available, it came out with a new policy to discourage them. The authority of conducting examinations, setting papers and preparing results was lying with non-Muslims.

The reasons of our doubt were very clear. In this examination Hindi and Sanskrit subjects were made optional, whereas Urdu, Persian and Arabic had been totally excluded. Sixty per cent seats were filled up by the Government without referring them to the Board and for the remaining forty per cent seats a candidate had to produce a certificate determining his noble origin. If any Muslim candidate would overcome all these obstacles, the Government reserved the right to disqualify him without any explanation. The age limit fixed at the time of appointment was twenty-two years. This policy of the State was again aimed at keeping Muslim candidates away from Government services, whose age was almost above twenty-two years. We understood the trick of the Government and in order to counter it I thought it proper to contact the young people of my community.

It is strange that, on one hand, the Government justified its policy of over-representation of Kashmiri Hindus in the administration on the plea that the Muslims were educationally backward and, on the other, it did not take any steps to encourage Muslims in favour of modern education. On the contrary, they were discouraged from receiving modern education by denying them positions consistent with their qualifications. More so they were denied the patronage, which was invariably bestowed upon the non-Muslim students.[110]

Little wonder, therefore, that the architects of Muslim Conference were those Muslim young men of Kashmir who were denied the positions, which they expected by virtue of their qualifications. It is also interesting to note that the Reading Room Party – the forerunner of

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110 For example the Government granted scholarships to those students who used to go for higher education outside the State. But, these scholarships were often bestowed upon the non-Muslim students. For details see Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*. pp. 19-20.

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the Muslim Conference, mainly focussed its attention on anti-Muslim appointment policy of the State.[111] Before the formation of the Muslim Conference these leaders devoted much time in collecting information about the poor representation of Muslims in different branches of administration, which was published in the daily *Inqilab* with the avowed purpose of mobilizing public opinion in favour of the movement that the educated Muslims of Kashmir were planning to launch against the Maharaja.[112]

The role of the discriminatory policy of the Government in alienating the Muslims from the State can be inferred from the following remarks of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah who was repeatedly denied what he otherwise deserved or expected: An opportunity to do B.Sc. in Jammu,[113] a seat for M.B.B.S.,[114] a scholarship for going abroad for further studies,[115] a scholarship for doing M.Sc. at Aligarh[116] and, last but not least, an equitable position to his qualification – M.Sc. Chemistry:[117]

> After my constant failure I reached the conclusion that to expect justice from the prevailing system was a futile exercise. Slowly I began to identify my personal failures with the collective national tragedies.

This was not all. The Hindu officials were notorious for their rapaciousness, short-sightedness and cruel treatment which hit hard the Muslim subjects.[118] While the pro-Hindu recruitment policy of the State created a strong resentment mainly among the educated sections of the Muslim society, the corrupt, harsh and biased attitude of the Hindu official class bred a deep-rooted indignation among the common

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111 Ibid., pp.49-53.

112 Ibid., pp.57-58

113 Ibid., pp.18-19.

114 Ibid., p.15.

115 Ibid., pp.19-20.

116 Ibid., p.20.

117 Ibid., p.22.

118 Arthur Brinckman and Robert Thorp, *Kashmir Oppressed*, pp.66-67; Tyndale Biscoe; *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p.268; Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.401.

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Muslims.[119] This helped in creating a mass base for the educated intelligentsia who, after having denied their rights, had thought of no other way but to give an organised and sustained fight to the *Raj* to force it to change its policy of discrimination against the Muslims.

The examples of the corrupt and inhuman attitude of the Hindu officials towards the Muslim subjects are too numerous to be quoted here for want of space. We shall, therefore, cite only a few examples to substantiate our argument. Walter Lawrence, who had very intimate knowledge of the official class of Kashmir, by virtue of being the Land Settlement Commissioner of the Valley, observed around 1890:

> They (Pandits) are very true to one another, and, owing to their unity and to the fact that they have monopolised all State offices, their power has been enormous ... In character, disposition and ability they are, as private individuals, infinitely superior to the Musalmans of Kashmir, but, ... they have proved as officials, rapacious, shortsighted, and cruel. [120]

> The Pandits are loyal to one another, and the village *patwari* knows that when awkward questions are asked he has friends at the tahsil, at the headquarters of the *Wazir-i-Wazarat*, and in the *Daftar-i-Diwani*. It was a powerful ring of iron, inside which the village tax payer lay fascinated... In recent times there were few Pandits who were not in receipt of pay from the State, and the number of offices was legion. But though this generosity in the matter of official establishments was an enormous boon to the Pandit class, it was a curse and misfortune to the Musalmans of Kashmir; for the Pandit does not value a post for its pay, but rather for its perquisites, and every post in the Valley was quickly made a source of perquisites[121].

Apart from the opportunities of peculation offered by the prevailing revenue system, the officials made illegal exactions known as *rasum*. It consisted of requisitions for village produce and was a form of purveyance on behalf of officials. Under this system officials would obtain wood, fodder, milk, poultry, grains, blankets, and an occasional pony, cows and

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119 For details about the complaints of Kashmiri Muslims against the malpractices of Pandit officials see Memorandums of 1924 and 1931.

120 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.282. While substantiating Lawrence, E.F. Knight writes, "Low salaried as these officials were, they enjoyed a luxurious life on the income they earned by all fraud means. It was not, therefore, surprising to see a Tahsildar with a small pay of thirty rupees a month spending three hundred to five hundred rupees a month..." See E.F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, p.29.

121 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.401.

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sheep free of cost.[122] Walter Lawrence makes a graphic portrayal of the abuse of powers by the officials: [123]

> I have often been present when a requisition for carriage arrives in a village, and the following account of the system is a simple statement of what used to be an everyday occurrence. Someone in Srinagar wants ten coolies or porters to carry his baggage for a stage, or for one or more stages. The official to whom the requisition is made passes on the order of the district officer, and in order to make sure that there will be no deficiency in the number of the coolies writes that twenty men are wanted. The district officer writes to the tahsildar and acting on the same prudent calculation, orders forty coolies. The tahsildar then seizes eighty coolies from the villages. Nearly all these eighty men are engaged, perhaps, in weeding or watering their rice, and as they do not know how long they may be kept waiting in Srinagar, and as they dread that in their absence their fields will run dry or will be chocked with weeds, they are not allured by the idea of a wage of four-annas a day which they may or may not receive. Bargaining begins, and if the official incharge of the business is a smart man he will take seventy four-annas from the seventy villagers whom he exempts, and will send in ten men to Srinagar. If he is a very smart man he will take eighty four-annas from the eighty villagers, and will still send in ten men to Srinagar... The instance I have given above refers to the modest demand for carriage made by an European visitor, and in such instances the wage of four-annas per stage was invariably paid, but when the requisition for coolies was on account of State work no wage would be paid... And higher officials would build houses in the city or cultivate wasteland through the unpaid labour of the villagers.

The Muslim peasantry had not only to feed the revenue officials they had also to provide for the needs of their relatives and friends known as *mutabir*. Some officials like Tahsildars had always their *mutabirs* with them in the Tahsil.[124] No wonder then, that the Muslims of Kashmir in their memorandum of 1931 to the Maharaja Hari Singh pleaded that "all unauthorized exactions should be stopped".[125] And in response to this general complaint of Kashmiri Muslims, Glancy Commission (1931-32) also

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122 Census of India, 1931, I, p.40.

123 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.412-414. See also Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p.236.

124 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.420; E.F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, p.29.

125 Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.

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recommended that "wherever a Government official would be found involved in corruption, he should be severely punished. Moreover, the Chowkidars and Patwaris should be appointed from the locals which would help in stemming out corruption".[126] The officials were not only corrupt, but in order to please their masters they also resorted to extreme kinds of inhuman torturous methods to exact as much as they could from the famish peasantry. To quote E.F. Knight:[127]

> At the time of collecting the land revenue, the use of nettle scourage in summer and of plunging recurrent tax payer into cold water in winter were popular methods of torture carried out against the peasants. Through these corrupt practices and oppressive methods of the revenue department, the Muslim cultivators suffered unspeakable injustice and oppression.

It is, therefore, no surprise that the mere sight of an official's visit to any village caused all hell to fall upon its dwellers. It is also substantiated by Walter Lawrence:[128]

> The official visit, which to us officials seems so pleasant to all concerned, sends the pulse of the village up many degrees, and those are happy who dwell far away from the beaten tracks... He has good reasons to hate and distrust them.

It was not only the revenue officials who had wrecked havoc upon the masses, but every branch of the administration was plagued by corruption, the brunt of which was borne mainly by the Muslims. To quote Prem Nath Bazaz:[129]

> Almost the whole brunt of official corruption had been borne by the Muslim masses. The Police, the Revenue Department, the Forest officials and even the employees of the Co-operative Societies, had their palms oiled by exaction of the usual *rasum*. No body felt any sympathy with this distressing picture of poverty. The channels of human kindness and mercy had run dry. To loot the peasants was no sin; society did not disapprove of it.

The villagers including wood-cutters, artisans and milkmen who used to get their commodities to the urban centres for selling purposes were often harassed by the State authorities. It is worthwhile to quote Tyndale Biscoe:[130]

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126 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.141.

127 E.F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, p.29.

128 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.5.

129 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.144.

130 Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p.135.

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> I have seen these milkmen after their long run when just outside the city stopped by the police and sepoys and forced to give up their milk on pretence that they have been sent by some big official, so unless there happens to be some God-fearing man near to defend them it is of no use their refusing. The ordinary man in the street is generally too frightened to interfere, so those uniformed robbers play their own game with impunity. I have had the good luck to come upon them at the right moment more than once.

Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah corroborates Tyndale Biscoe:[131]

> One fine morning I went to the market in my locality. I saw a person employed at the custom duty picket beating a villager mercilessly. It was winter and the poor villager had brought some ponies loaded with fire wood for sale in the city. After the payment of custom duty the villager began to move, but the official on duty further demanded the thickest pieces of the wood. The villager knew that it would halve the value of the wood. He, therefore, hesitated and the man on duty began to beat him and the poor villager helplessly started crying. I went there to confirm the cause of the episode. The hapless woodcutter burst into tears and told me that after the payment of custom duty he had already given some pieces of wood free of cost to the man on duty but that did not satisfy him and he began to snatch away the thickest pieces of his woods.

Regarding the malpractices prevalent in the judicial system making judiciary a perpetuator of injustice Bagh Ram, the Judicial Member of the State Council had remarked that "the institution of justice had lost its meaning and hence perpetuated injustice and oppression".[132] The perversive role of Judiciary and Police is summed up in the following verses of Ghulam Ahmad Mahjur – the contemporary national poet of Kashmir:[133]

> *Justice of the present only reduces the seeker of justice to nullity,*
> *Justice of the present only punishes the innocent and his relatives,*
> *Justice of the present only pillories the victim and his supporters,*
> *Justice of the present declares tyrant kind and generous.*

Being conscious of their despotic and tyrannical rule, the Dogra rulers had given enormous powers to the police and other agencies of law and order without subjecting them to checks and balances. Writing about the oppression of police Walter Lawrence observed:[134]

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131 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.26.

132 *JKA*, Administration of Justice in Jammu and Kashmir State, a note by Bagh Ram, Judicial Member of the Council, November 18, 1889.

133 Ghulam Ahmad Mahjur, *Kulyat-i-Mahjūr*, p.310.

134 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.9.

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> A wise Kashmiri with whom I was conversing on the subject of the alleged oppression of the police, said, in answer to a question of mine, "of course, the police annoy us, and I presume that this is the purpose for which they are employed. There is no crime in the country, and the police must have something to do".

Thus, it is proved beyond doubt that the Hindu officials did oppress the Muslim majority of Kashmir and in order to perpetuate their monopoly over the State services they devised every possible means to close the doors of Government offices to them.[135] Worse, it was a commonplace practice among officials to insult their subjects, even the most respectable among them. The role of this attitude of the bureaucracy in alienating the masses against the State can be gauged from the following statement of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah:[136]

> Our Mohallah was situated on the outskirts of the Municipality. We were, therefore, not entitled to get ration from the Food Control Department. In order to get the ration cards, the people of our locality made a representation to the authorities. In response to it, an official of the concerned department visited our locality to verify our bonafides. In order to brief him about the situation some people of the locality gathered around him and I was one among them. My elder brother, Shaikh Muhammad Khalil was also present at the spot and he was a respectable person in the eyes of the people of the locality. The said officer first of all asked about the President of the Mohallah and the people in one voice pointed towards my brother. The official just after listening this, without any reason slapped my brother. All this was surprising for the people and there was complete silence in the gathering. I also remained in a fix for some moments, as to why the officer without asking any thing manhandled the most respectable person of the locality. I could not understand the reason behind it. In fact, during those days it used to be the attitude of the authorities towards their subjects. I began to think as to what kind of sins the Muslims have committed for which they are being humiliated and maltreated? Population wise they dominate in the State and it is they who fill up the treasures of

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135 "Following in the footsteps of the Punjabis and Dogras, the Pandits by hook or crook made it difficult for the Muslims to get even subordinate jobs". For details see Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, pp.147-148.

136 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.27-28.

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the State. Why are they being harassed and how long shall it continue?

Considering the above facts, it is not for nothing that the Muslims of Kashmir demanded that "in case the Muslims of Kashmir are not considered fit for such appointments like Governors and Superintendents of police and customs, an Englishman or non-local Muslim should be assigned these responsibilities",[137] and "that for lower positions Muslim matriculates should be preferred over non-Muslim graduates".[138]

This is not to suggest the ideological background of the bureaucratic behaviour. But, as the bureaucracy was monopolized by the non-Muslims, giving them free hand to fleece the masses, the primarily economic nationalism assumed 'communal' colour, especially when the non-Muslims refused to become a part of the mainstream.

c. Agrarian Crisis

Are there also *zamindars*[139], tenants, landless village brethren, and the big *chakdars*? Do there also the idlers enjoy sumptuous dishes and the working class suffers for the want of a morsel of food?

Ghulam Ahmad Mahjūr

Though each section of the Muslim community was seething with discontentment owing to the oppression Kashmir was reeling under, the fact remains that the most discontented lot was the peasant class, the biggest segment of the population of Kashmir. The causes of their discontentment were many, but the most crucial were the confiscation of proprietary rights in land and the oppression they were subjected to

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137 Memorandum submitted by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading, the Governor General of India, in 1924.

138 Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931. "It is a fact that for all these miseries of the Kashmiri Muslims Government officials are responsible and it appears that all of them are non-Muslims. It is for this reason that the Maharaja does not hear about the feelings of the Muslims". Statement of a Christian Missionary to *Ittihad-i-Islam*, Lahore, April 4, 1924.

139 It is pertinent to mention that in the context of the agrarian history of Kashmir *zamindar* is not the landlord but peasant.

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by the State and its supporting structure –*jagirdars*,[140] *chakdars*,[141] and *maufidars*.[142]

Like any medieval society, the social formation of Kashmiri society during the period of our study was feudal-like, as the major portion of the peasant produce was appropriated by the State and its collaborators. Immediately after the Dogras took over as the rulers of Kashmir, they declared the whole land of Kashmir as the State property.[143] While this declaration was obviously aimed at legitimizing the maximization of land revenue and other demands, its no less purpose was to facilitate the revoking of land grants enjoyed by the Muslim *jagirdars* and *maded-i-maash* holders, and to create a new supporting structure to act as the props of the *Raj*.[144] The new props were mainly recruited from the Hindu community who were considered the only faithful subjects to rely upon.[145]

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140 Next to the Maharaja the class of people who appropriated a considerable portion of the revenues of the Valley were the *jagirdars*. The whole village or a portion thereof, whose revenues were assigned to a particular individual for various reasons was known as *jagir* and the assignee was called *jagirdar*. The *jagirdars* can be classified into four categories; a) those given purely as a favour; b) those given as a reward for services rendered to the State and c) those granted for political reasons. There were both small as well as big *jagirdars* and they too were infrequently the proprietors of the land; *JKA*, F. No: 117 of 1896; Note on A.R. of the Minor *jagirs* of Kashmir.

141 The year 1862 witnessed the creation of a novel agrarian institution in Kashmir, which led to the emergence of a new class of landed aristocracy. It was called *chak* and the assignee of such grant was known as *chakdar*. The creation of this institution was motivated by two objectives viz. to bring the fallow land of the Valley under cultivation and to reinforce a class of favourities. For details see A.Wingate Report : *JKA*, File No. 76 of 1896; *JKA*, File No: 16 of 1902 .

142 The rent free land grant given either for the life time in perpetuity to religious classes, religious institutions and others was known as *maufi* or *Dharmarth* and the grantee was called *maufidar*. For details see *JKA*, File No: 150 of 1895; File No:96/G-4 of 1897; File No: 16/H-7 of 1902; *Ain-i-Dharmarth*, pp.1-15.

143 *JKA*, File No:191/H-751 of 1918.

144 For details about revoking of *jagirs* and other kinds of land grants enjoyed by the Muslims, see *JKA*, File No:117 of 1896.

145 Josef Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir*, p.16.

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A big portion of land was appropriated by the *jagirdars, chakdars* and *maufidars*. This can be gauged by the fact that more than12 per cent of the total revenue of the State was assigned for *jagirs* and *maufis*. In Kashmir Valley alone an area of 2,91,689 acres was under the various categories of landlords.[146]

The fact that a large area of land was under the possession of the different categories of landlords can be inferred from the fact that immediately after the end of Dogra rule, 55 lakh kanals were transferred to the tillers by passing the famous Abolition of Big Landed Estates Act(1950).[147] It may be noted that by virtue of this Act only that land was transferred from the landlords which exceeded 182 kanals and the orchard and *maufi* lands were exempted from it. Though this Act was only a beginning towards the abolition of landlordism in Kashmir, by virtue of it 396 big *jagirs* were revoked and 2 lakh and 50 thousand tillers became the proprietors of land.[148]

The most critical feature of landlordism of our period was that the dominant majority of landlords belonged to Hindu community who constituted only 20 per cent of total population of Jammu and Kashmir State and not more than 5½ per cent of Kashmir Valley.[149] The statistical information about the creed-wise proportion of landlords is not available. However, all the contemporary sources are unanimous that the landed aristocracy mainly belonged to Hindu community.[150] Besides, there are some stray references which support this argument. For instance, we have some statistical information about the land held as *jagir* by 30 *jagirdars* in 1890-91. Out of total 326 villages valuing Rs.2,85,358 as revenue, held as *jagir* by these 30 *jagirdars*, 259 villages valuing Rs.2,25,816 were held by Hindu *jagirdars* whose number was 17, whereas the remainder 13 Muslim *jagirdars* held 67 villages valuing only Rs.59,542.[151] In this context it may also be noted

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146 It is pertinent to mention that in Jammu province the area of land held by different kinds of landlords was 3,62,276 acres and in Frontier 46,145 acres. For details see Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.230.

147 Mirza Afzal Beg, *Agricultural Reforms in Kashmir, Foreword*, p.iii.

148 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.489-490.

149 Census of India, 1931, I, pp.73-74.

150 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.414.

151 *JKA*, File No. 7 of 1890.

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that after 1890 many Muslim *jagirdars* were deprived of their *jagirs*.[152] No wonder then that the abolition of landlordism became one of the main slogans of Muslims Conference and it is also understandable as to why the Abolition of Big Landed Estates Act (1950) evoked stiff resentment among the Kashmiri Pandits and their sympathisers like Sardar Patel?[153]

The Dogra rule was ushered in by many retrograde policies. But the most backward step taken by it was the confiscation of proprietary rights in land which the Kashmiri peasantry was enjoying without any interruption since the earliest times.[154] In the new circumstances, to quote A. Wingate, "the Government became a farmer, working with coolies under a management closely approximating forced labour."[155] The peasants lost not only the proprietary rights but the occupancy rights[156] also. As mentioned above, it was only the Kashmiri peasant whose proprietary rights in land were confiscated. The new law did not apply to Jammu peasant. He continued to enjoy the proprietary rights in land,[157] obviously because the Dogra rulers always considered Jammu as their home and Kashmir as the conquered territory.

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152 "Rights from the coronation of Maharaja Hari Singh upto November 29, 1931, about 20 Kashmiri Muslims were deprived of their *jagirs* which valued from Rs. 5,000 to 10,000 each." *Inqilab*, Lahore, November 29, 1931.

153 To quote Shaikh Muhammad Abudllah: "Our agrarian reforms did not suit to the vested interests of the State and their supporters at the Centre. Sardar Patel particularly opposed these reforms. The main cause behind his opposition was that the Hindu *jagirdars* of the State had told him that we were introducing these reforms under the religious bias, because most of the *jagirdars* coming under the Land Reform Act belonged to non-Muslim community". See Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.493.

154 For the proprietary rights enjoyed by the Kashmiri peasantry during medieval times see M. A. Wani, *Some Aspects of the Socio-Economic and Cultural life of the people of Kashmir under Sultans*, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), Post Graduate Department of History, University of Kashmir, pp.294-297; M A. Kaw, *Agrarian System of Kashmir, 1586-1819*, p.123.

155 A. Wingate, *Report*, p.56.

156 Ibid.

157 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.123; In this context it is pertinent to quote the observations of a contemporary politician and historian, Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, "They (Dogras) established a sort of

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It was at the instance of the strong recommendations made by A. Wingate and his successor Settlement Officer, Walter Lawrence,[158] that occupancy rights were conferred upon the peasantry in 1894-95.[159] But the peasants of the *jagirs*, *chaks* and *maufis* continued to remain as tenants-at-will.[160] Thus, while the majority of the peasant population working in the lands held as *khalsa*[161] enjoyed occupancy rights on the eve of the foundation of the Muslim Conference, a good number of peasants were no more than farm-labourers. However, the mere conferment of occupancy rights did not satisfy the peasantry, as the confiscation of proprietary rights in land was not only regarded as serious interference in the age old rights of the peasantry, but it was also considered tantamount to denigrating, uprooting and dislodging the peasant population. It also took the hearts of the peasantry out of cultivation.[162]

Besides, the confiscation of proprietary rights in land was used as a weapon by the State to legitimize its policy of rack-renting. Small

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Dogra imperialism in the State in which the Dogras were elevated to the position of the masters and all non-Dogra communities and classes were given the humble place of inferiors." See Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.127.

158 For the pervasive recommendations made by A.Wingate that the peasants should be given proprietary rights and Walter Lawrence that they should be given only occupancy rights, see A. Wingate, *Report*, p.61; Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.429-430.

159 *JKA*, File No: 27/H-34 of 1896; File No: H/75 of 1896. A.R. of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1895-96, pp.127-134.

160 "Till the passage of the Tenancy Act (1933) the landlords could evict any peasant at their sweet will. But after passing this act, they had to take the Tahsildar into confidence". Based on the information collected through interviews with the contemporary peasants.

161 It is pertinent to mention that *khalsa* lands were those lands which were directly under the management of the State.

162 Though Glancy Commission was not in favour of conferring proprietary rights upon the peasantry, it made no boons in accepting the fact that "it is said that if the peasants are given proprietary rights in land, it will instill a sense of confidence and dignity in them and this will help in cultivating among them the love for the land they have been working on. This way they will properly realize the significance and advantages of their labour. Doubtless there is a great substance in this argument". Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt* pp.122-124.

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wonder then, that the restoration of the proprietary rights in land figured among the important demands made by the Kashmiri leadership through their memorandums right from the days of nascent signs of consciousness among the Muslims of Kashmir. In this context one may refer to the memorandums presented to the Government by the Kashmiri Muslims in 1924[163] and 1931.[164] It would not be out of place to quote the demand for the restoration of proprietary rights submitted by the Muslims of Kashmir through the memorandum of 1931 to Maharaja Hari Singh in response to a Government proclamation:[165]

> *Zamindars* of Kashmir are deprived of proprietary rights over their lands, whereas those of Jammu fully enjoy these rights. The people of Kashmir cannot sell or mortgage their lands on their own will. They cannot even cut the mulberry, the walnut and the chinar trees grown on their private lands or make use of them, nor can they remove dead and fallen timber of such trees; with the result Kashmiri *zamindar* is no better than a mere tenant. There is no reason to make a distinction between Kashmir and other parts of the State (Jammu). No government has the right to sell the proprietary rights of the lands belonging to the people. We, therefore, request your Highness to be most graciously pleased, to restore full proprietary rights of your Highness's *zamindar* subjects.

It is important to mention that the restoration of proprietary rights in land was one of the main issues on which the struggle of Muslim Conference centred. And it was owing to its struggle that the demand was exceeded to in 1933.[166] However, even after 1933, a sizeable peasant population viz. those who were working in *jagir*, *chak* and

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163 *JKA*, General Department, File No:524/F/62 of 1924.

164 Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.

165 Ibid. It was under the pressure of the historical incident of 13 July 1931, wherein about 21 Kashmiri Muslims laid down their lives outside the Central Jail, Srinagar, that Maharaja Hari Singh issued a proclamation in which all the communities of the State were asked to submit their demands in a written form. Thus, the memorandums submitted by different communities to His Highness Maharaja Hari Singh were presented before the Glancy Commission for evaluation as well as recommendation purposes.

166 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 at Mirpur vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.200. It is to be noted that it was only in case of *khalsa* lands that the proprietary rights were conferred to the peasantry.

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maufi lands continued to remain either mere crop sharers or tenants-at-will.[167] The confiscation of proprietary rights in case of *marusi* peasants[168] of Kashmir and the creation of new class of tenants-at-will by the grant of *chaks* and *jagirs*, was a sufficient cause of generating deep resentment among the peasant masses. However, the oppressive policy of the Government and its collaborators viz. landed aristocracy and the revenue functionaries, angered them beyond any scope for reconciliation. The high pitch of land revenue and other taxes, the faulty method of land revenue assessment and collection, the exaction of illegal taxes (*rasum*), the *begar* and the gross neglect of the basic problems of the peasantry by the State and the landlords were their main grievances.

On the eve of the formation of the Muslim Conference the magnitude of land revenue in case of the *khalsa* land of Kashmir Valley was $\frac{1}{3}$ of the gross produce.[169] Strangely enough, it was lighter in Jammu as only ¼ of the total produce was charged as land revenue there.[170] The high pitch of land revenue demand borne by the Kashmiri peasants can be inferred from a complaint submitted by a Mirpur peasant though he was lightly taxed in comparison to his Kashmiri counterpart. According to him he had to pay Rs. 51 for 85 bighas situated within the boundaries of Jammu and Kashmir State, whereas

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167 It was in 1933 that proprietary rights were conferred upon the peasantry in *khalsa* lands as a result of the struggle of Muslim Conference. But the peasantry working on *jagir* and *chak* continued to remain either mere crop sharers or tenants-at-will as late as 1950. It is to be recorded that even in 1950 the orchard and *maufi* lands were exempted from the land reforms introduced by the Nationalist Government. For details about the conferment of proprietary rights in *jagir* and *chak* see Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.493-494; Mirza Afzal Beg, *Agricultural Reforms in Kashmir*, pp.15-16.

168 *Marusi* peasants were those peasants who were the lawful occupants of land in Kashmir since very early times. For details see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.428.

169 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.301-302.

170 Mirza Shafiq Hussain, *Dastawaizāt*, p.195.

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for the same area of land located within the jurisdiction of Punjab, he had to pay only Rs.10 and 8 annas.[171]

Before we enumerate other taxes and the overall impact of the land revenue and other imposts on the peasantry, it is important to mention that the land revenue assessment also was not free from some grave lacunae as the productivity of land did not only vary from one village to another, but also from one holding and another of the same village, a fact which was prominently highlighted by Walter Lawrence.[172] Thus, all those peasants had to suffer whose land yielded less than what was fixed as the standard per unit productivity of land. Glancy Commission also makes a passing mention of it in its report.[173]

The method of revenue collection and mode of payment was also oppressive. It may be remembered that the State realised it's share both in cash as well as in kind. While 2/3 of the assessed revenue was paid in cash, 1/3 of it was paid in kind.[174] The rates fixed for paddy and other crops were very high. Naturally, the Kashmiri peasants who always suffered for want of currency had to depend upon money-lenders commonly known as *waddars* in Kashmir, who while exploiting the helplessness of the peasantry loaned them money on high interest and purchased their grains at very low rates.[175] Thus, while on one hand, peasant was exploited by the State by charging exorbitant rates of the revenue, on the other hand, he was also fleeced by the *waddar* who charged high interest on the money he lended to the former for payment of land revenue in cash and purchased the peasant produce at very cheaper rates, which deprived the peasant of major part of his produce.[176] The payment of 1/3 of the land revenue in kind,

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171 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.463.

172 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.435-436.

173 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.128-130.

174 Ibid; p.139.

175 For details about *waddars* see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.5. In order to check the exploitation of the *waddars* (money-lenders), the State passed a law in 1928 by which the interest rate was fixed, However, the law remained only a dead letter. See Glancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.137-138.

176 The horrible stories about the exploitation of the *waddars* have been revealed to me by the contemporaries of the period. It is said that in

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known as *mujawaza,*[177] caused much havoc to the peasantry because by snatching away 1/3 of the produce in kind the peasant was left with a small quantity of produce hardly sufficient to fulfil his basic food needs for a few months.[178] It can be properly understood when it is borne in mind that in Kashmir only one crop was raised in a year and that the per *trakh* productivity of land was not more than 2 to 3 *kharwars.*[179]

State as well as the land grantees had their agents in the villages in order to keep a strict watch over the peasantry, particularly during the harvest season, to avoid any chances of embezzlement by the famish peasantry.[180] The peasants who are contemporaries to the period reveal shuddering stories of punishment inflicted upon those peasants who were found involved in hiding grains.[181]

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addition to local *waddars*, the absentee landlords hailing mainly from Srinagar and other towns of the Valley were acting as money-lenders in the villages where they had their estates located. Since it was a privileged class and the State was always facilitating their job by keeping its law and order machinery at their disposal. Based on the information collected from contemporary peasants during interviews held in 1996-97.

177 For details about *mujawaza* see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.407, Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.129.

178 Based on the information collected during the course of interviews with contemporary peasants.

179 In terms of quantity *trakh* is equal to $11\frac{19}{175}$ lbs, and in case of size it is equal to two kanals. In case of quantity *kharwar* is equal to $177\frac{129}{175}$ lbs and in case of size it is equal to thirty-two kanals. In Kashmir the peasants generally refer to the size of land according to the weight of seeds that needed in its sowing during the times when the paddy seeds were directly sown in the field without developing a nursery, as is practice now, and the method was known as *vatur*.

180 For details about these officials, called *Shakdar* and *Sazawol*, who were being assisted by the *nizamat paltan* during the harvest season see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.402-403. In case of privileged landholders the village headmen were commonly the men of their choice. See Mirza Afzal Beg, *Agricultural Reforms in Kashmir*, p.10.

181 There is a foot-bridge made of a single piece of *deodar* log over a stream at village Audsoo, Anantnag. It is having many round depressions at different places but in a row. There is an interesting story related to these depressions common among the elder folk of the village. It is said that these depressions were formed by the peasants who used them to crush a

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It was because of the over-concern of the Government to feed the vocal city population on cheap *shali,*[182] that it realised a part of revenue in kind from the docile village population even if a peasant could produce only as much of paddy as could fulfil his bare food necessities and that too just for a few months only. Here it is worth mentioning that not only the incidence of tax was uniform,[183] but *mujawaza* was also imposed on every peasant ignoring the vast disparities in the size of land of one peasant and the other.[184] Given the circumstances it is no wonder to find a Kashmiri peasant shuddering to hear the name of *mujawaza,* and it is also no surprise to see the Kashmiri leadership demanding:[185]

> The Department of Shali (rice) should be liquidated and the restrictions imposed on the import of food grains from outside the State be removed, in order to reduce the burden on peasants who had to pay revenue in the form of *shali* and food rationing in Srinagar be restricted to poor people only.

Kashtkar (a peasant working on *jagir*, *chak* and *maufi* lands) was worst hit by the system of *ghalla batai* (crop sharing) – a common method of land revenue assessment and collection in *jagir*, *chak* and

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little quantity of paddy which they used to hide in their grass shoes and leggings while thrashing. The method of hiding grains is also substantiated by the fact that until very recent times it was a common occurence in the whole Valley to see the storage pots of clay – *lej* and *mat,* being unearthed around the fields of the villages. These storage pots were once used by fleeced peasantry to hide a few *trakhs* of grain in the face of the rack-renting policy of the State which left almost nothing with the peasant. Based on the information gathered during the course of interviews with the contemporary peasants.

182 For vehement criticism against the policy of the State see, Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.409-410; Sardar Budh Singh, *Kashmir-mein-qahat* vide *Ranbir,* weekly, Jammu, vol.8, June, 1932.

183 For details about the criticism of the leadership against the defective and oppressive taxation policy of the State see the presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Sixth Annual Session of the Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.462-463.

184 Ibid.

185 Memorandum submitted by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading, the Governor General of India, on his visit to the Valley in 1924.

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maufi lands.[186] Unlike the *khalsa* peasants, who had to pay 1/3 of the assessed revenue in kind, the *kashtkar* had to pay ½ of his produce to his *malik* (owner) in terms of grain[187] after paying *trakhi* (two *trakhs* per *kharwar*) of the gross produce towards him.[188] The *kashtkar* had not only to part with half of his grains but even the grass had to be divided equally.

Even one-third to say least of one-half as land revenue was burdensome for the peasants of Kashmir Valley, as unlike the plains there was one-crop-a-year economy in Kashmir and because of the climatic factors the yield of per unit area of land was very less and the crops were frequently damaged by cold waves and the untimely snowfall on the hills of Kashmir.[189] Besides, because of the scarcity of currency and the absence of other sources of income the paddy was the only currency at the disposal of the peasant, out of which he met his varied liabilities. He not only purchased his daily requirements by exchanging his paddy produce, but the village servants which in Kashmir were of 36 types, were also paid in terms of paddy.[190]

This was not all. The peasants were subjected to a number of other legal and illegal taxes. Apart from land revenue the peasants had to pay 12 *annas* as *chowkidari*[191] and a cess of 6 paise per rupee for the repairs of Jamia Masjid.[192] In addition to this the peasants had to pay *kahcharai* (grazing tax) and tax on walnut trees and all kinds of orchards.[193] Varied kinds of perquisites commonly known as *rasum*, were exacted from the peasants. Thus, a peasant had not only

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186 The system of *ghalla batai* continued unabated in *jagir, chak* and *maufi* lands. The system was however, discouraged since 1932 onwards. For details see Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.135.

187 Information gathered through interviews with contemporary peasants. See also *Dastawaizāt*, p.135; Mirza Afzal Beg, *Agricultural Reforms in Kashmir*, p.32.

188 Information gathered through interviews with contemporary peasants.

189 M.A Wani, *Hill Agrarian Economy of Medieval India: A case study of Kashmir*, an article presented in Indian History Congress, Dharwad Session of 1988.

190 Information gathered during the course of interviews with contemporary peasants.

191 Glancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.155.

192 Memorandum submitted by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading, the Governor General of India, on his visit to the Valley in 1924.

193 Glancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.125 and 132.

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to part a portion of land produce with different officials but he had also to share his poultry, cattle, wealth, blankets, ghee, fodder, wood and timber, and infact almost every thing which he produced.[194] Though Walter Lawrence had strongly recommended that urgent steps should be taken against the exaction of *rasum*,[195] no action seems to have been taken in this regard, even when it continued to be a constant complaint of Kashmiri peasantry. It was not only the Kashmiri leadership which highlighted this grievance in the memorandums submitted to the Government in 1924 and 1931,[196] but the Glancy Commission also gave a prominent place to this complaint of Kashmiri peasantry in its report:[197]

> Complaints have been received that in every Government Department such as Police, Revenue etc. corruption is rampant. A small Government servant like Forest Guard or Game Watcher lives on the expenses of villagers and exacts bribes by the way of taxes from the villagers in a regularized manner.

By parting a major portion of produce with the State and the officials, after paying both legal and illegal taxes, the peasant was left with not more than ¼ of his produce.[198] He lived for the most part of the year on rice-gruel, vegetables, wild fruits and other sub-standard kind of diet, and sometimes sold his property in lieu of paltry sums[199] and became an easy victim of famines and epidemics.[200] Given the

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194 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.415. The contemporary peasants during their interviews with the author revealed that the exaction of various types of perquisites by the revenue and other officials continued in remote villages for a long time even after 1947; For rampant corruption in Police, Revenue and Public Works department see Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.140-141.

195 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.447-448.

196 See memorandums of 1924 and 1931 submitted by the prominent Kashmiri Muslims to Lord Reading the then Indian viceroy and Maharaja Hari Singh respectively.

197 See Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.140-141.

198 Information gathered during the interviews with contemporary peasants.

199 It is common to hear in the villages of Kashmir that, "this piece of land has been sold or purchased in lieu of one *trakh* of rice or one *seer* of tea", and the like.

200 For details about the famines and epidemics see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 214-215 and 218-219. Some contemporaries of the period reveal that the main cause behind the epidemics was the sub-

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conditions, it becomes amply clear as to why the political leaders often sang the following famous revolutionary couplet of Dr. Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal in the public gatherings:[201]

Gis khait say dehkan ko mayasar na ho roozi
Us khait kay har khoshaye gundum ko jalado

(Burn all crops of the land that does not provide livelihood to its tiller)

These conditions reduced the position of a peasant to a mere 'food gatherer' who often crossed the difficult mountain passes in search of it somewhere in the plains. The Kashmiri Muslim students studying in different universities of India were deeply moved by the pathetic conditions of the migratory Kashmiri peasantry. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, who was one among these sensitive students, recollects his heartrending experience:[202]

> My stay at Lahore, for other reasons, awakened me from the slumber and made me familiar with new spirits. I saw Kashmiri Muslims in big bands leaving their beautiful land for the hard plains of Punjab in search of livelihood. These labourers had to cross on foot the snowy mountains of M̃ari and Banihall and had to face thousands of odds in their way. Each of them carried with him little food items and some broken earthen utensils. For nights they had to stop somewhere in the way. The bare ground used to be their bed and the open sky as shelter. Sometimes, while crossing the mountains, these people were perishing as a result of snow storms. These unfortunate people were dying unwept, unsung and their bodies were eaten by the vultures and other carnivorous birds and animals. Some people possessing strong physique luckily succeed in reaching the plains, but there they had to face numerous odds and worries. During the day they wandered through the streets in search of work. Some worked as woodcutters, some as helpers to the shopkeepers, some carry heavy loads on their backs while some of them did grinding. After doing hard work during the day, they earned very little money of which maximum was spent on their meals. They passed their nights either in any inn or mosque, where they were harassed like dumb driven cattle. Many a time I found some Kashmiris begging for meals. I felt ashamed and

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standard diet used by the working classes during the times of famines whose occurrence was common in Kashmir.

201 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah writes that he frequently sang this couplet in public meetings. See Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.490.

202 Ibid. pp.37-38.

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asked one of them, "Why are you begging? Don't you get any work?" The labourer replied. "Yes Sir! We definitely get it. We earn about 12 to 16 annas a day but we have to collect and save this amount because on our return we have to pay land revenue to the State, buy clothes for our children and carry some food items for our families. If we spend this money on our meals, we cannot make both ends meet".

The peasant was not only robbed of the major portion of his produce, but he was also subjected to another inhuman exaction called *begar* (forced labour). Though the horror of Gilgit *begar*[203] was no more there after the construction of Gilgit road and though *begar* was partially abolished by the Government in 1891 and fully in 1920,[204] it continued unabated in different forms. Because of medieval means of communication, overall technological underdevelopment, the prevalence of feudal expenditure pattern of the State[205] and the consequent meagre resources at the disposal of the Government, the problem of raising labour power for carriage and construction purposes on nominal wages formed a critical feature of the Dogra administration.[206] Besides, the Government order that the remuneration should be paid to the forced labourers, applied only to labourers requisitioned for *kar-i-sarkar* (Government work).[207] So far as the exaction of *begar* for personal services of the officials was concerned the order made no mention of it. At the same time the position of peasants working on *chak, jagir* and *maufi* lands was like those of the

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203 For details about Gilgit *begar* see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.413; E.F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*. pp.67-68.

204 State Council Resolution, dated, April 18, 1891. No doubt the State abolished *begar* fully in 1920, (*JKA*, File No: C – 57 of 1920) but according to the information gathered from the contemporary peasants, the *begar* of various types continued for a long time.

205 By feudal expenditure we mean exhausting State exchequer by spending on unproductive sectors like giving away gifts and distributing alms at the time of the birth of princes, birth anniversaries of the members of the royal family, marriage ceremonies and construction of temples etc.

206 For details see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.413-414.

207 As late as 1932 Glancy Commission found the order about the abolition of *begar* as a dead letter and laid a stress on its proper implementation. See *Dastawaizāt*, pp.141-142.

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serfs.[208] Therefore, the exaction of *begar* was an indispensable feature of the *malik-kashtkar* relationship.[209] No wonder then, the abolition of *begar* was frequently demanded by the Kashmiri Muslims in their memorandums submitted to the Government in the twenties of the twentieth century.[210] Even as late as 1932 Glancy Commission found the Government order regarding the abolition of *begar* a dead letter:[211]

> So far as the *begar* is concerned His Highness issued orders that adequate payment should be made to those who would be forced to do some labour under Government orders. Complaints have been received that not unoften the Government officials disobey the orders of His Highness and force the villagers to carry the loads of the officials to far-off places without any remuneration. As a matter of fact they exact other kinds of unpaid services from them.

The indiscriminate and regardless manner in which the peasant masses were requisitioned to do *kar-i-sarkar* can be better gauged from the following incident quoted by Sham Lal Kapur, the editor of *Guru Ganthal,* in its issue of 1 March 1927:[212]

> As the Nawab of Malirkotla desired to visit all hill stations in Kashmir, the Government had placed at his disposal a large number of labourers to carry his camp. One morning while riding a horse he saw a group of wretched labourers sitting in the immediate neighbourhood. So he went there to have a few words with them. In the course of conversation he was extremely sorry to learn that they were the members of a *barat* (marriage party) who had been seized while on their way back with the bride to attend on his camp. Even the bridegroom was not spared. He too was seized at the same time and not even allowed to accompany his bride to his new home.

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208 To quote Prem Nath Bazaz, "I shuddered when I heard the condition of the people living in the *jagirs*. The depredations of the *jagirdars* are monstrous. There is no law but the will of the *jagirdars* in these parts of the State. I was told that people may not marry even their daughters against the wishes of the *jagirdars*". See *Inside Kashmir,* p.232.

209 Information gathered during the course of interviews with contemporary peasants.

210 For details see the memorandums submitted by the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam to Maharaja in 1922 and by the prominent Kashmiri Muslims to the Indian Viceroy Lord Reading in 1924.

211 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.140-141.

212 *Guru Ganthal*, Lahore, January 3, 1927.

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The upper class quest for adventure, holidaying and undertaking pilgrimages was a bolt from blue for the Kashmiri peasant, as no such activity of the pleasure-seekers and pilgrims could be fulfilled without exacting forced labour from him. In this context it is interesting to quote Shaikh Atta Muhammad, an Advocate, and one time President of Muslim Kashmiri Conference Lahore, who had made an on the spot study of the conditions of Kashmiri Muslims:[213]

> The natural beauty of Kashmir, its meadows, its villages and forests are the bounties of nature. Alas! this paradise on earth is a hell for the sons of the soil. The Kashmiris have been ruthlessly crushed. Every year thousands of Hindus go to Amarnath cave on religious pilgrimage but it is strange that the cave is being visited by riding on the backs of hundreds of Kashmiri Muslims who are requisitioned for *begar*.

It may also be noted that the orders of 1891 and 1920 regarding the abolition of *begar* did not apply to the construction of canals, embankments and the like. As a matter of fact, till 1947, it was obligatory upon the villagers to construct and repair the canals and embankments[214] besides helping the rulers and high officials in their hunting pursuits[215] and to peddle the boats of the royal river

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213 Statement of Shaikh Atta Muhammad vide Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*, pp.37-38.

214 Information gathered during the course of interviews with contemporary peasants.

215 Hunting was one of the most favourite spots of the Maharajas and the bureaucracy. Whenever the Maharaja or any bureaucrat or Government guest would wish to go for hunting in any forest of Kashmir, the peasants of those localities, where the hunting spots were located, were informed in advance about the preparation of "grass shoes" called *pulhur* and leggings, called *putouhur* – a woolen muffler to keep legs warm. It is pertinent to point out here that the hunting of animals was carried out particularly during the winter. The main purpose for which the peasants were employed was to raise hue and cry in the jungle to drive the hunting animals to an appropriate direction. This practice was known as *hakh*. For this labour the peasants were not paid any kind of remuneration. The information has been gathered during an interview with Abdul Ghani Ganai, resident of village Audsoo, Anantnag, age 70 years, dated, 15 December 1999. It is to be noted that the village Audsoo is situated near Achabal, Anantnag, which is a famous health resort of Kashmir. There is a forest adjacent to Achabal Mughal garden where the Dogra Maharajas and their high officials used to go for hunting.

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processions without any remuneration.[216] And if anyone showed negligence, he was harshly punished and fined.[217] It may also be recorded that though the construction of Gilgit Road considerably lessened the terror of Gilgit *begar*, Gilgit menace still haunted the mental peace of many villagers, particularly those living near the road and those who were in possession of horses, mules and asses as they were often forced to carry the loads known as *ras*.[218]

It may not be beside the point to mention that the whole burden of *begar* fell exclusively upon the common Muslim peasantry as the Hindus, Sayyids, Thakurs, Rajputs and Sikhs were exempted from it.[219] This was no less a source of resentment among the Muslims of Kashmir. That is why the Glancy Commission recommended that when a requisition for labourers for *kar-i-sarkar* would arrive in a village, the burden should be uniformally imposed upon all sections of the agricultural community.[220] Abdul Ahad Azad has tersely versified the pathetic condition of the peasantry of the period:[221]

Pakun chum kar-i-begaras
Barun chum genis sarkaras
Yeyam vograi bapari
Ba na zareh ishkeh bemari

I cannot escape from *begar* and paying revenue in kind. I shall have to face the merchant who would come to recover the debt I owe to him. How can I afford romance?

Though the peasant was the backbone of the society and a source of strength and prosperity for the country, the Government paid no attention towards providing him basic necessities of life. While different facilities were provided to the city dwellers, the villager was even deprived of primary school facilities.[222] He did not have even

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216 Information gathered during the course of interviews with the contemporary boatmen living on the banks of river Jhelum in the peripheries of Srinagar city, dated January 10, 1996.

217 Ibid.

218 Glancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.142.

219 Ibid.

220 Ibid.

221 Abdul Ahad Azad, *Kulyat-i-Azād*, p.277.

222 For details about the extremely poor facilities of education in the villages of Kashmir see Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.98-99.

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those minimum medical facilities which, to quote a political leader of the time, "were available to the animals of cities."[223]

d. Labour Unrest

> It is because of Kashmiri artisan's hard work that the rich people are dressed in silken gowns. But he can hardly afford a torn rag to cover his body.
>
> Dr. Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal

Next to the peasantry the biggest segment of the population comprised of the skilled and unskilled labourers coming mainly from the urban centres especially Srinagar and exclusively belonging to the Muslim community.[224] Their woeful condition and the resultant unrest among them find repeated mention in various sources of the modern history of Kashmir.[225] It was because of several factors. Firstly, the demand of Kashmiri goods in European markets had heavily suffered because of the Franco-German war of 1870[226] and the economic

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In 1916, Mr. Sharp, the then Education Commissioner of India had visited Kashmir on the request of Maharaja Pratab Singh in order to have his expert opinion to develop the system of education in the State. In addition to his other recommendations, he had suggested to open at least one primary school in all the villages with 500 population. But as late as 1932 Glancy Commission found that this recommendation had not been followed by the State. Even till 1947 and in some cases thereafter, villages with 500 population and above did not have primary school facilities.

223 Presidential Address delivered to the Sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah at Srinagar on October 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.464.

224 Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*, pp.127-128.

225 No doubt the shawl-weavers had developed a fatalistic outlook but owing to oppression, exploitation and misery, they had occasionally tended to manifest a spirit of revolt against intolerable conditions. Earlier in 1847, they had resorted to strike (Lahore Political Diaries, 1848-49, vol,.VI, p.48) and demanded the reduction of various kinds of taxes, such as *baj* and *nazrana*. They also demanded that the wages of the labour be fixed and urged the Government to establish a rule of law in respect of this industry and codify it. For details see K.M. Pannikar, *Gulab Singh-Founder of Kashmir*, pp.139and 199.

226 *NAI*, Foreign, Sec; E, March, 1883, Nos.86; Bates, *Gazetter of Kashmir*, p.59; Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, pp.115-116; Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.375. Lawrence writes that, "I have been told by an eye-witness of the intense excitement and interest with

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depression of 1929. Secondly, the importation of machine-made goods had caused severe blow to many indigenous industries, throwing a lot of people out of employment. And the State showed no interest to preserve the traditional crafts of Kashmir.[227] At the same time, because of the influx of currency and increase in the imports over exports, prices of basic necessities had sore very high.[228]

It is to be remembered that the shawl industry was the leading industry of Kashmir till 1870.[229] It employed about 29115 Muslim shawl-weavers besides an innumerable number of spinners.[230] However, in spite of being the backbone of Kashmir's economy, the shawl-weavers were the worst hit of oppression. They were exorbitantly taxed and like serfs tied to the looms.[231] No wonder, therefore, if a Kashmiri woman wished her neighbour ill, she would say, "may you get a shawl weaver for husband."[232]

The agency of *Daghshawl*[233] often became a source of oppression in the hands of its officers. Armed with the authority of rulers, the officials of this department subjected the poor weavers to a great deal

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which the Kashmiri shawl-weavers watched the fate of France in that great struggle – bursting into tears and loud lamentations when the news of Germany's victories reached them".

227 For the indifferent attitude of the State towards the arts and crafts see *Pratab*, Lahore, February 27, 1926.

228 Census of India, I, 1931, p.213.

229 When it flourished, the shawl industry had provided subsistence to the bulk of the city's population. During the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh and Maharaja Ranbir Singh, there were 30,000 to 40,000 shawl-weavers in Srinagar. But, as a result of the decline of the industry, the Census of 1891 records that there were only 5,148 shawl-weavers; *NAI*, Foreign, Sec. E, March, 1883, No.86, p.15; See also Census of India, 1921, I, p.181.

230 Bates, *Gazetter of Kashmir*, p.30.

231 Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, p.179; Robert Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, pp.42-43; *Ranbir*, weekly, Jammu, January 6, 1925; Biscoe; *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p.115.

232 Bates, *Gazetter of Kashmir*, p.33.

233 It was a department which had been functioning in Kashmir since the Mughal occupation (1586). During the period of our study, it was exclusively manned by the Kashmiri Pandits. It used to realise oppressive taxes from the shawl-weavers and the *karkhandars*. The Pandit official machinary of the department was so rapacious and cruel that it exposed the weavers to penury and untold misery.

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of tyranny, which in turn, often led to the forced migration of the shawl-weavers to Punjab. And when they succeeded in managing their escape in the face of a strict vigil on the passes leading to plains,[234] the members of their families were not left in peace. No sooner did the weaver give up his job, than the *karkhandar* (cottage industrialist) informed the *darogah* (superintendent) in order to get his tax decreased.[235] The *darogah* then sent a sepoy to the house of the fugitive. It is said that his wife or mother or father or probably all of them, were brought before the *Daghshawl*. They were fined a rupee or two or imprisoned for a few days by the authorities, whose cruelty and injustice had extorted "from them in some cases, their almost only means."[236]

The first ever labour rising of its kind was organised by the *shawlbafs* (shawl-weavers) in 1865 in the city of Srinagar.[237] The motive forces behind this rising was the miserable economic condition of the weavers. They were the lowest paid working class, and were subjected to inhuman treatment by their employers and the corrupt officials of the *Daghshawl*. The immediate cause of the labour rising was an oppressive measure adopted by the contractor of the *Daghshawl*, Pandit Rajkak Dhar, "who was supposed to recover and pay to the State twelve lakh rupees."[238] The taxation policy of the State was managed in such a way by the employers that its greater burden fell on the weavers. The weavers were to pay 49 rupees each as a contribution towards the sum of the 12 lakh rupees to be paid to the State. An ordinary weaver had, thus, to pay five rupees as tax out of his monthly income which ranged from seven to eight rupees. This

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234 Robert Thorp, *Cashmere Misgovernment* (Kashmir papers p.68). A good many people of Kashmir are said to have attempted to escape to the Punjab during the famine of 1878-79, "but at the barriers troops were stationed to prevent the migration of the people, and harrowing tales are told of the fathers of families getting past the barrier by bribing the guardians of the passes, while the wives and children were left to die in Kashmir". Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.215. The system under which no person could leave the Valley without permission was known as *Rahdari*.

235 Robert Thorp, *Cashmere Misgovernment* (typed copy), p.23.

236 Ibid; p.24.

237 Sahibzada Hassan Shah, *Tarikh-i-Hassan*, p.98.

238 Prithvi Nath Koul Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir*, p.668.

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intolerable policy forced them to unite and present a petition of their grievances to the Governor. On 29 April 1865 the shawl-weavers marched in a procession, towards Zaldagar, Srinagar. The processionists uttered slogans expressing their demands. They also burnt the effigy of Rajkak Dhar. They were ordered to disperse, but they refused. Troops were then sent under the command of Colonel Bajay Singh to crush the procession. They pounced on the unarmed and unguarded labourers and "charged them with guns and spears. After some labourers died, the procession ran towards the bridge of Haji Rather and most of them fell into the marshy canal and got drowned. Hundreds of workers suffered minor and major injuries and at the end 28 dead bodies were returned to the people by the army."[239]

The agitation was suppressed ruthlessly. Its prominent leaders namely Shaikh Rasool, Abli Baba, Qud Lala and Sona Shah were arrested and brought to the Shergarhi palace and beaten mercilessly and strapped. They were thrown in a dungeon. Shaikh Rasool and Abli Baba died of these atrocities. A heavy fine of Rs. 50,000 each was imposed on all the four leaders and when it came to light that they were poor it was proposed to be reduced to Rs.25,000. But the Maharaja did not agree to this remission, for he wanted to make it a test case and an example for his subjects.[240] The other two leaders were sent to Jammu to be imprisoned in Bahu Fort. In addition to it hundreds of agitators were arrested and put in the prison of Habak. Most of them died of cold and starvation.[241] The Government of India deputed some officers to enquire into these atrocities, but could not sympathise with the miseries of the people. After all, they had themselves suppressed the uprising of 1857 and they could in no case encourage such movements in the native states.

After 1870, the economic condition of the shawl-weavers worsened beyond recovery. The fact is that out of the total quantum of exports of Kashmiri shawls France purchased 80 per cent.[242] However, the Franco-German war of 1870 led to the economic bankruptcy of

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239 Nab Shah, *Wajeez-ut-Tawarikh* vide Ghulam Hassan Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir 1931-1940*, p.79.

240 *JKA*, File No.306 of 1922, p.57.

241 *JKA*, File No.313-E of 1865.

242 Bates,*Gazetter of Kashmir*, pp.69-70.

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France,[243] Kashmiri shawl almost lost its market. Thus, the majority of the *shawlbafs* was thrown out of employment. Some of them went to plains to become daily labourers, some took up agriculture and some opted for lesser income crafts.[244] Those who continued their traditional profession had to content with very meagre wages as a corollary of demand supply relationship. The Government took no steps to maintain the world famous shawl industry of Kashmir by exploring new markets once the French market was closed to it. This was the main grievance of the Kashmiri craftsmen and the intelligentsia against the rulers. To quote Prem Nath Bazaz:[245]

> The Government of Kashmir tell us that the Franco-German war of 1870 gave a fatal blow to the shawl trade in the West from which it could not revive. But this is no defence when we know that such blows had been dealt upon the industry prior to 1870. If the market in the West was lost temporarily a Government could create new market elsewhere. But this could be achieved only if the Government were sympathetic and wide-awake.

Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, one of the founder members of Muslim Conference and the one belonging to a *karkhandar* family gives heart-rending details about the destitute condition of the *shawlbafs* and *rafugers* (embroiders) owing to the downfall of shawl industry after 1870:[246]

> A boy living in my neighbourhood Abdul Ahad by name worked with me in an embroidery centre installed in our house. He was attractive, good looking and also highly civilized and etiquette-loving inspite of his poverty. He remained away from the centre perhaps on account of illness as reported, but I soon learnt that he was dead. When I went to his home to console his parents a horrifying story was revealed to me. His family had been running into debt of a usurer, who had continuously been asking for clearing the debt. He also insulted them in the bargain. My sensitive friend could not bear this. Hence, he would save money for clearing debts on the pain of starvation. He would somehow manage to feed his two younger sisters but himself remained feeding on chaff. This broke down his health and resulted in his consumption to death.

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243 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.375.

244 Ibid.

245 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.78.

246 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.24-25.

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> A similar incident also writs large in my mind. I was now a grown up boy and would do some chores at home. When the shawl business declined, large sums of money were left unpaid with the artisans. To recover the money we went to the court. The court passed the orders of seizing the property of one such artisan of Dabwaker village of Tahsil Ganderbal. I was sent alongwith the court officials to confiscate his property. My heart was moved as I saw nothing but some torn out pieces of matting and earthenware in the home of the debtor. After seeing this deplorable condition of the artisan, I was extremely grieved. I began realising that these artisans are the real source of our prosperity. And if the shawl trade declined, why should these poor artisans be blamed for not paying the debts.

The Kashmiri Pandits exclusively manned the *Daghshawl* department, which regulated the shawl trade. Whereas the Muslim shawl-weaver lived in a very chronic poverty, so much so that he could hardly manage two square meals, the Hindu officials associated with the collection of taxes from the shawl-weavers were living a pompous life. The following casual reference of Walter Lawrence brings out clearly the marked contrast between the Pandit official and the Muslim weavers:[247]

> The houses (in Srinagar) vary in size from the large and spacious burnt-brick palaces of the Pandit aristocrat and his 500 retainers, warmed in the winter by *hammams*, to the doll house of three stories, and three rooms of wood and sun-dried bricks, where the poor shawl-weaver lives his squalid cramped life and shivers in the frosty weather.

After the confiscation of proprietary rights and the maximization of revenues in land, the next step taken by Maharaja Gulab Singh was to fall upon the savings of artisan especially the shawl-weavers.[248] He had imposed heavy taxes on this industry and levied other duties such as a pool tax of Rs.47 per annum on each shawl-weaver. In order to ensure a constant flow of income he did not allow a worker, whether half blind or full blind, to leave his loom without a substitute. He also charged an *advolerm* duty of 25 per cent on each shawl. Besides, his officials charged their illegal exactions which also amounted to 25 per cent of the cost. As mentioned earlier, in the face of such oppression

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247 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.35.

248 *JKA*, File No. 835.

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the workers preferred to flee from the Valley.[249] Gulab Singh imposed tax on every shop at Rs.120 per annum for old shops and Rs.60 per annum for new shops.[250] It was in 1897 that the owners of the shawl factories as well as other workers were highly agitated and presented their grievances before George Taylor.[251] The rack-renting policy of the State as well as the corrupt attitude of the authorities had turned the condition of the shawl-weavers deplorable. Madusuden Ganju has also highlighted the pitiable condition of the shawl-weavers:[252]

> The standard of living of the workers engaged in the woollen industry, as a whole, is very low. Their food is poor, clothing tattered, and the houses in the most dilapidated condition. They cannot afford to drink milk and eat mutton say even once a week. Their staple food in Kashmir province is rice which they eat with an ordinary kind of cooked vegetable leaves, called *hak*. Some of them cannot afford even that much.

The discontentment of a big and vocal class of shawl-weavers, majority of whom were city dwellers, provided a fertile ground to those few sensitive souls who had realized that for inaugurating a new and just era there was no other alternative but to launch a sustained struggle against the Dogra rule. Kashmiri freedom fighters and their Indian supporters voiced the downfall of the Kashmiri handicrafts and the resultant pathetic condition of the artisan class. German Das, a famous Indian nationalist expressed his grief in these words:[253]

> During the past times Kashmir was famous in India and abroad for its arts and crafts, its *shawl* and *pashmina*. Now the position is reverse and the cloth from foreign lands is imported, thus resulting in the economic devastation of the villages which were the centres of arts and crafts.

The ruination of traditional Kashmiri crafts not only evoked the sympathies of the Indian nationalists but the Indian press also voiced its concern in this regard:[254]

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249 John Irwin, *Shawls*, p.9.

250 K.M. Pannikar, *Gulab Singh 1792-1885 – Founder of Kashmir*, p.139.

251 Mirza Saif-ud-Din to Montgomery Lawrence, June 15, 1847.

252 Madusuden Ganju, *Textile Industry in Kashmir*, p.109.

253 Statement of German Dass vide *Pratab*, Lahore, February 27, 1929.

254 Ibid.

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> Old arts and crafts of Kashmir are being wiped out, but the Government has done nothing to develop these old traditions. Kashmir is famous throughout the world for its shawls and woodwork. Alas! All these arts and crafts will become things of the past.

The deplorable condition of the artisan class and the indifferent attitude of the rulers became one of the main issues debated in the annual sessions of the Muslim Conference. In his presidential address to the second annual session of the Muslim Conference Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah observed:[255]

> From times immemorial Kashmir was known for its arts and crafts and the Kashmiri artisans were famous throughout the world for their skill. The European kings and nobles were fond of Kashmiri crafts. But the downfall of market and the disorganisation of Kashmiri artisans gave a blow to the arts and crafts of Kashmir. The lack of Government patronage added to the devastation and ruination of Kashmiri crafts. No doubt, the Government has established an industries department, but if this department will be asked what it has contributed towards the welfare of craftsmen like shawl-weavers, carpet-weavers, willow-workers, goldsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, paper-makers, gun-makers and other artisans and the development of these industries, the answer would be totally negative. If the Government provided any assistance to anyone, it is some outsider silk trader or Mr. P.K. Watal's brother Awtar Krishan Watal, a carpet trader or Raja Hari Krishan's brother, Pandit Daya Krishan Koul, the owner of the match factory. But, so far no Muslim industrialist or artisan received any such assistance.

The shawl-weaver was not the only discontented artisan of Kashmir. In fact, all the artisans and craftsmen were hit hard by the economic depression and the importation of machine-made goods. If the former resulted into the drastic fall of Kashmir's exports leading to the decline of Kashmiri crafts, the latter did no less in this direction, as the hand-made goods were unable to compete with the cheap machine-made goods. That is why the Census Commissioner of 1931 observed:[256]

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255 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference at Mirpur, on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.304.

256 Census of India, 1931, I, p.222.

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> Artisans who have to face a severe competition of machine-made goods have been severely hit and have turned to land. Land is the only safety valve to which all castes look for an escape from the disaster facing them. The old economic division of society has to a very large extent disappeared. Most of the castes are cut off from their ancient moorings, which has led to unemployment and economic distress.

Silk industry was probably the only industry which maintained its flourishing condition throughout the period. It was a Government undertaking, which provided livelihood to thousands of people.[257] The Srinagar Silk factory alone employed 5,000 workers.[258] All these workers, it is to be noted, were Muslims and almost all the officials of the silk industry belonged to non-Muslim community.[259] In the famous memorandum of 1924, submitted by the prominent Kashmiri Muslims to Lord Reading, the problems of the Muslim labour of silk industry were also highlighted. It also prayed for the appointment of Muslims on higher positions of silk industry:[260]

> Since the entire labour force of Silk factory consists of Muslims, it is essential that they may be appointed on higher administrative posts in the factory.

In 1924, the labourers of this factory were paid daily wage of 4½ annas per head which was obviously too inadequate, especially in view of the rising cost of living and the huge profit it earned.[261] The corruption was so rampant that the Kashmiri Pandit officials shamelessly pocketed even a part of their wages.[262] The workers of the factory had constantly been complaining against the insufficiency of wages, the corruption of the officials and the tyranny of the inspecting staff. The contention of these labourers was that in addition to their low wages, they were insulted by the officials who demanded bribes from

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257 Younghusband, *Kashmir*, p.213.

258 Census of India 1931, I, p.219.

259 Memorandum submitted to Lord Reading, the then Indian Viceroy, on his visit to Kashmir in 1924, by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar.

260 Ibid.

261 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, pp.333-334.

262 Ibid.

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them.[263] Besides, the Silk factory of Srinagar also remained closed for two or three months in a year for which no wages were paid to the workers.[264]

On the persistent demand from the labourers, an enquiry was at last instituted. The allegations of corruption were found to be true, but instead of taking action against the guilty they were mutually transferred from one block of the factory to another.[265] It happened because the administration was entirely manned by the Pandits who unfortunately considered it a part of their duty to protect each other.[266] The failure of the Government to punish the guilty officials especially when the allegations had proved true created a lot of resentment among the workers against the bureaucrats. The Government, in order to suppress the popular resentment of the workers, arrested some of their ringleaders. This happened in July 1924.[267] In order to register their protest and make a demonstration of their solidarity with their imprisoned comrades the entire labour force marched in a procession, joined by their women and children. The processionists were entirely peaceful and were raising slogans demanding the release of their leaders, the punishment of corrupt officials and a reasonable increase in their wages.[268]

Hari Singh who was the commander-in-chief, rushed with a large force of cavalry and without any advance warning to disperse, ordered his troops, armed with fixed bayonets, to charge the strikers. Scores of people including women and children were trampled under and scores more were wounded by the bloodthirsty soldiers.[269] Almost the entire Muslim sector of the city went without meals that evening because of

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263 Riots Enquiry Committee Report, witness of Dr. Abdul Wahid before the Riots Enquiry Committee, July, 1931.

264 Presidential Address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference at Mirpur, December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.303.

265 *JKA* A.R. of 1981 (Samvat), p.9.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid.

269 *JKA*, A. R. of 1981 (Samvat), p.9.

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the depth of feelings and sorrow.[270] Though the labourers were able to gain an increase of six paise per day in their wages but dozens of their leaders were tried and sentensed to various terms of imprisonment.[271]

The State policy of patronising non-local industrialists and contractors caused a deep resentment among the Kashmiri labour class, as these non-local industrialists and contractors preferred to employ non-local labourers. It is strange that not only carpenters and masons, but more often than not, even unskilled labourers were imported from outside, though Kashmir had a superfluous labour-force, who for want of work in Kashmir used to leave for plains each year in search of livelihood. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah voiced this grievance of Kashmiri labour class in the second annual session of Muslim Conference: "The labour class complains of nepotism practised by the officers of Public Works Department. The department engages labour from outside the State ignoring the labour and man-power available in the villages".[272] It forced the labour class to starve.

e) Education And Awakening

> We had come to know England through her glorious literature, which had brought new inspiration into our young lives. The English authors whose books and poems we studied were full of love for humanity, justice and freedom. This great literary tradition had come down to us from the revolutionary period. All this fired our youthful imaginations...
>
> Rabindranath Tagore

Someone who is not aware of the history of modern education in Kashmir, especially its disproportionate growth between the two main communities viz. Hindus and Muslims, may wonder to notice the belated emergence of political consciousness in Kashmir; very late in comparison to British India. However, once it is learnt that the Muslims

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270 Ibid.

271 Ibid.

272 Presidential Address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference at Mirpur, December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.303.

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started modern education very late,[273] one's mind immediately sets at rest. Unlike the Hindus who besides having a strong pedigree of being literate community[274] and being the most favoured subjects of the Dogra rule, which encouraged and enabled them to benefit themselves from the new opportunities provided by modernization, the Muslims except a handful of religious class had neither literary or official pedigree nor did they enjoy any State patronage. Instead they were an oppressed mass. Education to them was a distant luxury and the wastage of time.[275] The religious class – the only Muslim group, with educational background had so vast economic resources that for a long time it did not feel the pressure of modernisation[276] which had prompted the Hindu official class to favourably respond to it.[277] The Muslim religious class, on the other hand, discouraged the community

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273 For the poor and late response of Kashmiri Muslims towards the modern education see Ernest Neve, *Beyond the Pir Panjal*, p.256.

274 For the rich literary background of Kashmiri Pandits see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.228-229.

275 The official version that the peasants regarded education useless by attributing this saying "pari pathi gali tarathi , hal vaga tukra phage" (education brings ruin, it is by ploughing that bread can be had) to them should be understood in this context. Census of India, 1911, I, p.160; Census of India, 1931, II, p.254.

276 The core group of the religious class of Kashmiri Muslims, which formed the reference group of the Muslim community during pre-modern times, had large number of *murids* (followers) who considered it a religious duty to part with a fixed quantity of their produce with the *pir*. This is to some extent true of present times. The *pirs* (Muslim priests) also acted as judges and officiated the religious rites in lieu of which they also earned a good amount of money. Moreover, they used to be the preachers of big mosques, which also provided them money in terms of *niaz* every Friday. For details see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.233 and 291.

277 In 1891 there were 250 students receiving education in C.M.S. School, Srinagar, and all of them were Pandits (See Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p.265.); Biscoe writes that they "were the sons or grandsons of those officials who had bullied and squeezed the Muhammedan peasants for years past, and their large houses in the city, with all their wealth, were a standing witness to their looting powers, for the salary they received from the State was quite insignificant". Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p.268.

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from receiving modern education.[278] In this they had obvious vested interests.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century one does not find even a single Muslim boy in the Christian missionary schools.[279] For political reasons, the Government also for a long time did not show any interest in disseminating modern education among the Muslims. To quote Prem Nath Bazaz:[280]

> The awareness that they (Dogras) were Hindus and the overwhelming majority of the Kashmiris professed Islam, constantly made them apprehensive. They disliked the idea of making their subjects politically conscious and thought that imparting of education was only an effective way of awakening the people to their political and human rights.

Funding a few *madrasas* and *maktabas* was the only interest shown by the Dogra rulers till the late seventies of the nineteenth century.[281] The establishment of British Residency in Kashmir in 1885 was a boon for Kashmiris, in general, and the Muslims, in particular. It is after 1885 that the Government showed some interest towards educating masses when some Primary and Middle schools were opened in different parts of the Valley. However, even in 1891 there were only 18 schools in Kashmir out of which 17 were primary schools and one was a middle school. Of the 18 schools, 10 were situated in Srinagar

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278 The Muslim religious leaders stressed upon their community that the Western education would turn them apostates and thus they would not be able to distinguish between right and wrong; For details see Prem Nath Bazaz *Inside Kashmir,* p.251; *The Ahl-i-Hadis,* Lahore, January 15, 1926; *The Statesman,* Delhi, June 11,1946; *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, June 2, 1946.

279 Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p.265.

280 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, p.215.

281 The *madrasas* which existed in Srinagar during 1872 were *madrasa* of Nawakadal, *madrasa* of Maharaj Gung, *madrasa* of Rainawari below Hari Parbat, *madrasa* of Basant Bagh and the *madrasa* of Aisha Koul. It is pertinent to mention here that only the *madrasas* of Nawakadal, Maharaj Gung and Basant Bagh were aided by the Government. (Administrative Report of J and K 'Report-i-Majmui', 1873, p.114). The information about the existence of above *madrasas* was supplied by Mr. Wynne, the then Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, to the Secretary to Government of Punjab. *NAI*/Foreign, Pol.A, Feb.1874, NOS.271-278.

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and the rest in other towns of the Valley.[282] Realising the baneful impact of the educational backwardness of the Kashmiri Muslims, their sympathisers in India persuaded the Maharajas to pay attention towards the educational aspirations of the Muslim community of Kashmir.[283] With the result, the Government opened some more schools and offered some financial assistance in the form of scholarships for attracting the Muslims towards modern education.[284] On account of opening up of schools in different parts of the Valley and providing them some financial help, there was some response from the Muslims towards modern education.

If not immediately but definitely from the beginning of the twentieth century, the Kashmiri Muslims started realising the background and consequences of the apathy of Dogra rulers towards educating the Muslim masses. It was fully realised that the Government shirks its responsibility simply because of political considerations, apprehending that education would make them (the Muslims) conscious against their exploiters.[285] Besides, it was owing to its feudalistic character that the State was economical towards the education of its subjects.

The prominent Kashmiri Muslims pleaded for providing educational facilities to the Muslims and devising ways and means for encouraging them towards education. However, when all the pleas and petitions of Muslims went unheeded, they sought the support of their co-religionist sympathisers of British India especially those of Punjab to exercise their influence for persuading the Maharaja to accede to this genuine demand of Kashmiri Muslims. As a result the All India Muslim Educational Conference sent a deputation headed by Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan to Kashmir in 1913. The deputation presented a memorandum to the Maharaja requesting him to take care of the

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282 *JKA*, Annual Administrative Report, 1891-92.

283 Riots Enquiry Committee Report, July, 1931; witness of Pirzada Ghulam Rasool; witness No.87; *JKA*, File No. 217/F-9 of 1913; It is pertinent to mention here that Kh. Ghulam Hassan Nizami of Delhi had also several meetings with Maharaja Pratab Singh wherein he pleaded for the amelioration of the conditions of Kashmiri Muslims; *Inqilab*, Lahore, July 6, 1931.

284 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.102-103.

285 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, p.215.

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educational aspirations of the Muslim community.[286] It was in response to the persuasion by the Indian Muslims that the Government instituted an office known as Special Inspector for Muhammadan education[287] and appointed an Education Commission in May 1916, under the chairmanship of Mr. Sharp.[288]

However, most of the recommendations of the Sharp Commission were not implemented at all. For example, it had recommended that the villages with a population of 500 should be provided with a primary school,[289] but the Government turned a deaf ear to it, though this recommendation was upheld by other commissions appointed by the Government from time to time to recommend ways and means to improve the lot of the people, particularly that of the Muslim community.[290] The malafide designs of the Government can be inferred from the fact that it kept the recommendations of the Sharp Commission as a top secret so that the Muslims did not get know of it.[291] After a gap of 15 years Glancy Commission remarked:[292]

> About some 16 years ago the Education Commissioner of the Government of India visited Jammu and Kashmir State in response to the request made by the Kashmir Darbar so that he would make necessary recommendations for reforming educational system. It is a common complaint that the recommendations of Mr. Sharp were not properly published and were to a large extent forgotten.

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286 *JKA*, File No. 217/F-9 of 1913.

287 The post existed in Kashmir on the eve of the appointment of Sharp Commission. See Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.108.

288 It was as a result of the persuasion of the prominent Muslims within and outside the State that in 1916 Maharaja Pratab Singh invited Sir Henry Sharp, the Education Commissioner of India, to suggest ways and means of providing educational facilities for the Muslims of Kashmir. Mr.Sharp made a thorough enquiry into the grievances of the Muslims and after examining their demands submitted a Report. *NAI*, Foreign Political Establishment, August 1916, NOS. 167-68, part-B.

289 Ibid; p.99.

290 Ibid.

291 "Soon after its publication the report was safely put in the Archives from where nobody could find it out. The Muslims rightly felt aggrieved over such a state of affairs", see Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.251.

292 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.98.

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In fact, the Muslims were not at all happy with the response of the Government to the Sharp Commission Report. They expressed their dissatisfaction time and again. In the draft of demands presented by the Kashmiri Muslims to Maharaja Hari Singh on 19 October 1931, the Muslim leadership complained:[293]

> The Muslims of Kashmir are deplorably backward in education. Unfortunately, Mr. Sharp's report, which would have benefited us, is not acted upon.

It may be noted that the predominant population of the Muslim community lived in villages and the predominant population of the Hindu community were urban dwellers.[294] Therefore, the negligence of the Government with regard to the establishment of even primary schools in about 80 per cent of the total villages of Kashmir was more disadvantageous to the Muslim community. It may be noted that out of 3,579 villages of Kashmir, only 618 villages were having elementary educational facilities.[295] Not satisfied with the Government attitude, the Muslims of Kashmir pleaded for taking some necessary steps to disseminate education among the Muslims. In their memorandum, submitted by the prominent Kashmiri Muslims to Lord Reading, it was prayed:[296]

> A Muslim or an European expert on education be appointed to look after Muslim education. Compulsory free primary education be introduced and the same be initiated from Srinagar city. Muslims be recruited both as teachers and inspectors in greater number and sufficient number of scholarships be made available to them for higher education in India and abroad.

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293 Memorandum submitted to Maharaja Hari Singh by the Muslim representatives in 1931.

294 Out of 1,000 population of the Hindu community 555 lived in city and towns, whereas the number of Muslim urban dwellers was not more than 120 per thousand. Census of India 1921, I, p.48.

295 It may be noted that out of 3,579 villages of Kashmir there were 2,961 villages which had a population of 500 and below and till the end of our period of study even those villages which possessed 500 population did not have even a primary school though the same was recommended by the education commissions appointed by the Government from time to time to improve the system of education in Kashmir. See Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.99; Recommendations of the Educational Reorganization Committee, 1938.

296 Memorandum submitted to Lord Reading by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar in 1924.

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The growing consciousness among the Muslims that the State had been adopting a non-chalant attitude towards promoting education among them is evident from the fact, that the educational grievances formed the main complaint of the Kashmiri Muslims submitted to the Glancy Commission:[297]

> Of the complaints submitted to the Commission, the most common and severe complaint is that some communities and especially the Muslims are not provided with adequate educational facilities.

It may not be beside the point to mention here that though the Kashmir Valley contributed a major share to the revenues of the Jammu and Kashmir State,[298] a discriminatory policy was adopted towards the development of the two regions. While it was true with regard to all developmental works, it was truer in the case of education. For example, even in 1932, when after a great pressure the State had modified its discriminatory attitude, there were 32 middle schools in Jammu whereas their number in the Kashmir Valley was only 27.[299] The Muslims were not only suffering for want of adequate number of educational institutions even for elementary instruction but the Hindus, who like other branches of the administration had also monopolized the department of education, also discouraged the Muslim students.[300] This is why Muslim leadership time and again asked for the appointment of the Muslim teachers as an effective means to attract the Muslims towards education.[301] And this is also the reason why both the Sharp Commission as well as the Glancy Commission upheld this demand of the Muslim community.[302] The Glancy Commission, while inquiring about the poor representation of Muslims in S. P. College of Srinagar, was told: "The Hindu teachers discourage the Muslims from taking science subjects".[303]

Though on paper the Government had earmarked some amount of money for the grant of scholarships to the Muslim community, this too was not actually spent. Even the official figures show considerable variation

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297 Glancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawaizāt*, p. 100.

298 *Siyasat*, Lahore, November 8, 1932.

299 Glancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawaizāt*, p. 100.

300 Riots Enquiry Committee Report (1931); witness of Moulvi Muhammad Abdullah Vakil before the Riots Enquiry Committee, p.65.

301 Memorandum submitted to Lord Reading by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar in 1924.

302 Glancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawaizāt*, p. 100.

303 Ibid., p.102.

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between sanctioned and expended amount.[304] The Government also made gross discrimination in the award of scholarships meant for paupers and orphans. The lion's share of these scholarships was appropriated for the students belonging to the Hindu community. According to the official figures, out of 190 students who were in receipt of *Wazaif-i-Yatama,* (scholarships meant for orphan students) there were only 42 Muslims and the rest were Hindus. Similarly, another kind of scholarship namely *Gaw Raksha Wazifa* (scholarship aimed at cow protection) which was meant for helping the poor and the orphan students of all the communities was practically given only to the candidates belonging to the Hindu community.[305]

For encouraging higher education the Government had the provision of granting scholarships to those students who were interested in doing post-graduation in Science subjects. But to quote Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, "These scholarships were generally awarded to non-Muslim students". It may be noted that the Shaikh himself made persistent requests for the grant of this scholarship, but all in vain.[306] For going abroad for further studies the Government had fixed the age limit of the aspirant candidates at 24 years. But this was a deliberate policy to eliminate the Muslim students from the race for going for higher studies as the Muslim students, because of their poor educational background, usually started their education very late. The fact that the Muslims understood the logic behind fixing this age limit is clear from the following statement of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, the then budding leader of the community:[307]

> I was the first Kashmiri Muslim to get M.Sc. degree. After returning to Kashmir I applied for going abroad to receive higher education. For entertaining such applications the Government had fixed twenty-four years as the age limit. Since I had already crossed this limit, my

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304 The following information pertaining to the allocation and expenditure of Muslim scholarships has been taken from the Glancy Commission Report (1932). vide *Dastawaizāt,* p. 103:

Year	Budget	Amount actually spent
1927-28	Rs.2,100/-	Rs. 1,103/-
1928-29	Rs.4,200/-	Rs. 4,072/-
1929-30	Rs.7,200/-	Rs. 6,484/-
1930-31	Rs.19,400/-	Rs. 16,321/-

305 Ibid., p.104.

306 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.20.

307 Ibid., pp.21-22.

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> application was rejected. The Government had fixed this age limit under a plan. Its main purpose was to keep the Muslims away from the opportunity of receiving higher education. Generally, these people were not in a position to attend such institutions and if anyone desired to go abroad, the age bar acted as a stumbling block in his way. Thus, the Government betrayed the Muslim candidates and made backdoor entries of privileged candidates. After my constant failure, I reached the conclusion that to expect justice from the prevailing system was only an illusion.

Instead of getting sensitive about the educational grievances of the Muslim community the Government further offended the Muslims by its policy of sidelining the "Special Inspector for Muhamadan Education", which was created prior to the appointment of Sharp Commission in response to the strong Muslim agitation both inside and outside the State. In this regard the Glancy Commission Report records:[308]

> It appears that for the last eleven years this official has been deflected from his proper work and has been deputed to discharge the general duties of an ordinary Assistant Inspector in one particular division.

In 1910 the official records put the total number of Muslim literates at 4,760.[309] But the majority of them were either simple literates meaning knowing reading and writing an ordinary letter[310] or literates in traditional learning or simply possessing elementary education imparted in primary schools. However, it was with the beginning of the twentieth century that we find an increasing number of Muslim literates owing to the expansion of schools.[311] We also find a sizeable number of middle pass and matriculate Muslim students.[312] Some of whom went for higher studies.

In the twenties of the twentieth century, the number of the Muslim students in educational institutions rose to become equal to, if not

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308 Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.108.

309 Census of India, 1921, I, p.111.

310 For this contemporary definition of literacy see Census of India 1911, I, p.165.

311 In 1921 out of 1000 Muslim males 19 were literates. Census of India, 1921, I, p.121.

312 The distribution of Muslim students of Jammu and Kashmir according to institutions is detailed as below:

Colleges132, Secondary Schools 21,478, Normal Schools 30, Maktabas 1,779; Annual Administrative Report of J and K, 1921, pp.97-98.

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greater than, the non-Muslim students.[313] Of course, their number was less in the colleges. But an interesting feature of the education of Muslim community was that many of them, in imitation to Hindu boys, went outside for obtaining higher academic degrees from different universities of British India. And it was these young educated Muslims who became the harbingers of political consciousness in Kashmir.[314] A sizeable number of Muslim literates in Kashmir, who were mostly middle pass and matriculates, acted as active workers of the new leadership as in comparison to illiterate masses they could understand the message dinned into their ears.

The modern education made the Muslim youth conscious about their rights and power they possessed to change the character of the Government with the support of the oppressed masses. The great seats of learning (i.e. the Indian universities) from which they obtained their degrees educated them about practical politics, as these institutions were also the hubs of political activities. Moreover, the Indian situation which was experiencing a tremendous wave of patriotism and high sense of sacrifice among its citizens for freedom fired the imagination of the Kashmiri Muslim youth for liberating their land, which was under the subjugation of more tyrannous rule than that of the British India. Writing about the impact of the Indian nationalism on the Muslim educated youth who received education from different Indian universities, the contemporary freedom fighter and historian Prem Nath Bazaz remarks:[315]

> The glorious chapter in the history of the National Movement of India could not but produce profound effect on the minds of the Kashmiri Muslim young men, who were studying in different universities and had therefore the opportunity to witness the various phases of the movement with their own eyes. Some of them participated in the Muslim League session at Allahabad in 1930, where for the first time Dr. Muhammad Iqbal adumbrated his theory of panislamism and a separate State for the Muslims of the Subcontinent in his presidential address.
>
> Fired with the spark of freedom and enthused with the emotion of panislamism a batch of young men returned to their

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313 Ibid.

314 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.147.

315 Ibid.

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> home early in 1931 A.C. The echoes and the reverberations of the Civil Disobedience Movement had been heard in the mountains and the Valley of Kashmir in advance of the return of these young men. It had created an atmosphere of defiance to cruel and despotic authority of the alien Dogra rulers. The stage was set with all the paraphernalia; only the actors were needed to play their parts. Who but these educated and enthusiastic young men were best suited for the task.

It is interesting to note that even those Kashmiri Muslim students who had gone to India for receiving higher religious education also returned as firebrand patriots obviously because none of the educational institutions of India, whether secular or religious, could remain uninfluenced by the tempestuous wave of nationalism that had hardly left anybody unmoved. Writing about Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah who returned to Kashmir in 1931 after receiving education from Dar-ul-uloom Deoband and gave his whole-hearted support to nascent political consciousness of Kashmiri Muslims, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah remarks:[316]

> It was during these times that late Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah returned from Deoband after the completion of his education, and he too had been influenced by modern ideas and thinking. He had also been influenced by some outstanding *ulema* (theologists) of Deoband and the spirit of the Khilafat Movement of India.

It may be emphasised that after returning from Indian universities, the main grievance of the Muslim educated youth against the Government was its denial to provide them suitable jobs.[317] The worst hit of the prevailing system was none other than Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, an outstanding leader of the Kashmir freedom movement. As mentioned in the preceding pages that after obtaining the degree of M.Sc. from the Aligarh Muslim University he was simply appointed as a school teacher,[318] whereas only a decade earlier (1920) the Deputy Commissioner of Mirpur namely Makhan Singh was totally illiterate.[319] Thus, imbued by the modern ideas, trained through exposure to plains, influenced with the Indian national movement and fed up with the prevailing system, these young men started a Reading Room at Fateh

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316 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.71.

317 Ibid., pp.47-48.

318 Mohammad Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar*, p.174.

319 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.298.

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Kadal, Srinagar where they used to discuss the problems created by the autocratic regime.[320] It was this Reading Room party which ultimately blazed the trail for freedom in Kashmir.

f. Role of Socio-Religious Reform Movements

> The customs and innovations *(bida)* have gone so deep into the Muslim society that to separate them from one another appears as painful as separating a nail from the flesh. But for the overall development of the Muslim society it is imperative and the need of the hour to bring about socio-religious reforms among the Muslims.
>
> Altaf Hussain Hali

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the rise of various socio-religious reform movements in Kashmir. Though these movements were organised by the Hindus as well as the Muslims, nevertheless, it was the former who had taken the lead because of their advancement in modern education. Before discussing the emergence and activities of these movements individually, it is pertinent to focus on the socio-religious milieu of Kashmir on the eve of the beginning of these movements, the objectives of the reformers and their vision of the future.

The dissemination of modern ideas and ideology led to an inevitable introspection about the strengths and weaknesses of indigenous culture and institutions. The response, indeed, was varied but the need to reform the social and religious life was a commonly shared conviction. The social base of this quest was the Western educated intellectuals. The socio-religious reform movements were no doubt occasioned by the colonial era but they were not created by it. The people of Kashmir were caught in a vicious web created by religious superstitions and social obscurantism. The priests exercised an overwhelming and, indeed, unhealthy influence on the minds of the people. Idolatry and polytheism helped to reinforce the position of the priests more among the Hindus.[321] The faithful lived in submission, not only to the God, the powerful and unseen, but also even to the whims and wishes of the priests.

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320 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.48-49.

321 Mr. Ernest Neve remarks: "the Hindu's whole life, from the hour of his birth till the day when he dies and his son sets light to his funeral prayer, is regulated by an elaborate code of religious rites, ceremonies and customs. They involve daily worship with evolution and offerings to idols of flowers and food, frequent fasting, and the observance of a very large number of holy days." *Beyond the Pir Panjal*, p.240.

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The social conditions were equally depressing. The most distressing was the position of women. The birth of a women was unwelcome, her marriage a burden and her widowhood inauspicious.[322] Often the marriage was a device to escape social ignominy and, hence, material life did not turn out to be a pleasant experience. Another debilitating factor was caste.[323] The rules and regulations of caste hampered social mobility, fostered social divisions and sapped the individual initiative. There were other innumerable practices marked by constraint, credulity, status, authority, bigotry and blind fatalism.[324] Rejecting them as a feature of a decadent society, the reform movements sought to create a social climate for modernization. In doing so they referred to a golden past when no such malaise existed. The reformers vision of the future, however, was not based on this idealization. It was only an aid and instrument – since practices based on faith cannot be challenged without bringing faith itself into question.

The twentieth century witnessed a cultural ideological struggle against the backward elements of traditional culture, on the one hand, and the fast hegemonizing imperial culture and ideology, on the other. The initial reforming efforts represented the former. In the religious sphere they sought to remove idolatry, polytheism and priestly monopoly of religious knowledge, and to simplify religious rituals. They were not important purely for religious reasons but equally for their social implications. They contributed to the liberation of the individual from conformity born out of fear and from uncritical submission to the exploitation of the priests. The simplification of the religious rituals made worship a more intensely personal experience without the mediation of intermediaries. An individual was, thus, liberated and encouraged to exercise his freedom. The socially debilitating influence of the caste system which perpetuated social distinctions was properly recognised as an area calling for urgent reform. It was morally and ethically abhorrent; more importantly it militated against patriotic feelings and hindered the growth of democratic ideas.

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322. For details about the low status of women, see Mohammad Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar*, pp.112-114.

323. In order to have a comprehensive understanding about the caste divisions among the people of the Valley, see Walter Lawrence *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.302-315.

324. Ibid., p.293.

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The campaign for the improvement of the conditions of women was not purely a humanitarian measure of the reformers. No reform could be really effective without change in the domestic conditions, the social space in which the initial socialization of an individual takes place. Women play a crucial role in this process. Therefore, there could be no reformed men and reformed homes without reformed women. It was realized by the reformers that no country could ever make any significant progress in civilization whose females were sunk in ignorance.

In addition to their objective of socio-religious reform, the reformers aimed at defending their respective religions against the evangelization.[325] Therefore, they instilled a spirit of confidence among their co-religionists by highlighting the past glories of their respective communities. It is to be noted that while mobilizing the masses, the reformers did not reject the tradition totally. But, they aimed at modernization rather than Westernization. A blind imitation of Western cultural norms was never a part of reform.

Socio-Religious Movements among Kashmiri Hindus

The State of Jammu and Kashmir being situated on the borders of Punjab, came under the influence of the Arya Samaj as back as the last decade of the 19th century.[326] The first branch of the Arya Samaj was established at Jammu in 1891.[327] For a long time it remained confined to Jammu Province.[328] It had branches at Mirpur, Kothli, Bhimber, Rajouri, Nowshera, Reasi, Rambhan, Baderwah,[329] Udhampur,[330] Kathua and Kishtwar[331]. At the beginning of the twentieth century Kashmir also came

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325. Some of the high British officials are reported to have made an appeal to the C.M.S. for the introduction of the words of God into Kashmir. See Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society, its Environment, its Men and its Work*, vol.II, pp.572-573.

326 Harish Chander Vidarthy, *Jammu Aur Kashmir Mein Arya Samaj Ka Itihas*, p.18; R.C. Arora, *Kashmir, Ladakh and Gilgat*, p.5.

327 Harish Chander Vidarthy, *Jammu Aur Kashmir Mein Arya Samaj Ka Itihas*, p.18.

328 *JKA*, File No.215 of 1910.

329 Census of India, 1901, I, pp.18-20.

330 *JKA*, File No. 2/M-163 of 1921.

331 *JKA*, File No. 125/46-MIS/of 1919.

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under the influence of the Arya Samaj[332] and a branch of the *samaj* was accordingly established at Amirakadal, Srinagar.[333] The founder members of it were mostly the Punjabies in the State services and some businessmen.[334] It is important to mention that the Arya Samaj in Kashmir was a branch of Punjab Arya Pratinidhi Sabha[335] and was registered on 26 December 1895 under the Act XXI of 1860.[336] To begin with, the Kashmiri Pandits did not join the Arya Samaj. They opposed the movement because non-Kashmiri Hindus, who had been patronised by Maharaja Pratab Singh, dominated it.[337] However, the opposition not withstanding, the *samaj* opened its offices at Amirakadal, Maharajgung, Hazratbal and Rainawari, Srinagar.[338] It had also opened its office at Baramullah.[339] The objectives of the *samaj* were:[340]

> a) To establish a vidyala for teaching of the Vedas and the ancient Sanskrit classics for the propagation of *Aryapdeshak* (doctrine of Arya Samaj); (b) to establish a library for the general public; (c) to publish tracts and books for the purpose of reviving the teaching of the Vedas and (d) to arrange for the preaching of the Vedic Dharma in Punjab, Kashmir, N.W.F. Provinces, Sindh and other places.

The movement of Kashmiri Pandits 'Kashmir for Kashmiris' launched to protest against the monopoly of Government services by the Punjabis and other non-Kashmiris[341] resulted into differences between the local and non-local Hindus and ultimately culminated in the emergence of Arya Kumar Sabha. It was organised separately by the Kashmiri Pandits as an independent socio-religious movement.[342] The *sabha* established its

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332 Census of India, 1921, I, pp.148 and 211.

333 Harish Chander Vidarthy, *Jammu Aur Kashmir Mein Arya Samaj Ka Itihas*, p.71.

334 Census of India, 1909, I, p.24.

335 *JKA*, File No.2/MIS/163 of 1921.

336 Ibid.

337 Ghulam Hassan Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p.51.

338 Harish Chander Vidarthy, *Jammu Aur Kashmir Mein Arya Samaj Ka Itihas*, p.18.

339 Census of India, 1921, I, p.62.

340 The Secretary Arya Pratinidhi Sabha Punjab to the Prime Minister, Jammu and Kashmir, Ist October, 1921; *JKA*, File No. 115 of 1920.

341 J. Manners, Resident of Kashmir to J.B. Wood, Ist September 1917, *NAI*/Home Deptt. September, 1971, NOS.6.

342 *JKA*, F.No.125/46—MIS/of 1919.

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office at Rainawari, Srinagar.[343] It worked as a part of the great Vedic movement in Kashmir[344] and had many achievements to its credit.[345]

As already mentioned the Kashmiri Pandits suffered from many social evils, which had neither sanction from the Hindu religion, nor could those be allowed by any standard of humanity. The most horrible social evils and practices were: the enormous waste of money on marriage ceremonies, dowry system, infant marriage, prevalence of widowhood, superstition, numerous unnecessary and unhealthy rituals and customs, and the rigid caste system. The Kumar Sabha was instrumental in persuading the Kashmiri Pandits to spend moderate amount of expenditure on the marriage ceremonies. Since no marriage could be arranged without an intermediary and no religious rites in connection with marriage could be performed without a priest. The reduction of expenditure on marriage entailed naturally a similar reduction of the moneys paid to the priests and intermediaries. Therefore, the *sabha* had to face opposition of these classes. The *sabha* advocated the widow-marriages, which was in line with the basic tenets of the Arya Samaj.[346] It established reading rooms where young Kashmiri Pandits, both educated and uneducated, were invited to read the literature or to discuss various aspects of the Hindu religion and society. The inter-marriages were indirectly favoured by the *sabha*. The *sabha* was against infant marriage and dowry system.

In due course, the Arya Kumar Sabha became a part and parcel of the Arya Samaj, Srinagar and later on acted as its youth wing. Its political aim was the Indianization of every thing in the country. It was because of the Arya doctrines that the leaders of the *sabha* had a deep faith in the *Swadeshi* ideology of the Indian National Congress.[347] The *sabha* laid thrust on the preaching of Vedas because it wanted to revive the doctrine type of religion, which was encouraging monotheism, leaving little scope for intermediaries between God and man, and discouraging rituals and customs.

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343 Census of India,1931, I, p.297.

344 Copy of letter No.30, October 19, 1917, from Pandit Madhav Bhan to the Superintendent of Police, Kashmir Province, Srinagar, *JKA*,.No.261/28-C.

345 Interview of Ram Chander Koul Abhai by Ghulam Hassan Khan.

346 Ibid.

347 Ibid.

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Mahesh Khushal Chand, editor of the *Milap*, Lahore, provided the lead in the activities of the Arya Samaj in Kashmir. He put his life and soul together to convey the message of Swami Dayanand to the Kashmiri Pandits.[348] Among other prominent leaders associated with the *samaj* were Ram Chander Koul Abhai, Pandit Janki Nath Dhar, Pandit Madhau Joo Bhat, Pandit Dina Nath Koul, Pandit Sham Lal Koul, Pandit Sham Sunder Vaid and Jager Nath Arya.[349] The outsiders associated with Kashmir Arya Samaj were Vishu Bandhu, Mahatma Hans Raj, Bhagwat Dutt[350] and Swami Shri Shiv Ratan Anand Ji Saraswati.[351] The reformist activities of the Arya Samaj extended to the removal of social evils and prejudices. It preached the marriage of young widows,[352] whose number was appaling.[353] Many of them were young and innocent girls exposed to temptations and often led unhappy lives.[354]

In 1928 Lala Lajpat Rai came to Kashmir. He was one of the leading lights of the *samaj* in India. He delivered a speech at Hazuribagh on 2 June 1928 in favour of widow-marriage and against child marriage.[355] As a result, the *samaj* celebrated some widow marriages in Srinagar and it did best to break down the opposition of conservative and traditional Pandits against the measure.[356] Arya Samajists advocated the abolition of caste restriction in the matter of marriages.[357] They also persuaded the Kashmiri Pandits to curtail expenditure on marriage and other types of ceremonies and to give up unhealthy traditions, customs and rituals.[358] The *samaj* made education the chief plank of its programme of reforms. It ran a girls school named Arya Putri Patshala of the Middle standard in a building of

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348 Interview of R. K.Kak by Ghulam Hassan Khan .

349 An interview with Dr. Z.L. Jala, Rainawari, June 9, 1985.

350 *JKA*, Daily Report, 1924-25.

351 *JKA*, File No. 194 of 1925.

352 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.266-267.

353 Census of 1921 shows that widows formed twenty two per cent of the female population of the Pandit community.

354 Tyndale Bisco, *Autobiography*, p.96.

355 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, *Personal Diary*, June2, 1928, Item 3.

356 Nagin Bazaz, *Ahead of His Times, Prem Nath Bazaz: His Life and Works*, p.30; *Hamdard*, May 15, 1938.

357 Census of India, 1941, I, pp.38-39.

358 *The Ranbir*, January 15, 1940.

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its own at Wazir Bagh, Srinagar.[359] It also ran a Vanita Ashram at Rainawari, where widows were given lessons and were also taught embroidery and weaving work to enable them to earn a living.[360] The *samaj*, besides disseminating modern education, propagated Hindi and Sanskrit among Kashmiri Pandits. It had also opened a reading room where its members were required to read religious literature and to discuss various aspects of the Hindu religion and evils of Hindu society.[361] A majority of the Kashmiri Pandits did not, however, accept the basic tenets of the Arya Samaj. The Sanatanist Kashmiri Brahmins did not agree with the *samaj's* opposition to idol worship, the *shradha* ceremony of the dead, and the *samaj's* belief only in the Vedas and in those Shastras, which were in strict conformity with the Vedas. The result was that the Arya Samaj movement remained confined to an insignificant portion of the population of Kashmiri Pandit community.

The leaders of the *samaj* preached the supremacy of Vedic religion over other religions. In their lectures and preachings they did not hesitate to criticize other religions like Islam and Christianity.[362] In 1923 the Arya Samajists were successful in converting a few Punjabi Muslims and one or two Kashmiri Muslims to Hinduism.[363] To challenge Hinduism, learned scholars among Kashmiri Muslims began to hold public meetings at Hazuribagh where they made counter attacks against the Hindu religion.[364] The result was that a bitterness between the two communities arose[365] that lived for a short time. When the anniversary of the Arya Samaj was going to be held from 8 to 11 July 1924, the Muslim associations like Anjuman-i-Hamdard-i-Islam and Anjuman-i-Khanqahi Mualla convened meetings and sent applications to Superintendent of Police, Kashmir, requesting him to warn the Samajists and preventing them from delivering such speeches as would hurt the feelings of the Muslims.[366]

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359 Census of India, 1931, I, p.297. The school is still functioning at the same place.

360 Nagin Bazaz, *Ahead of His Times, Prem Nath Bazaz: His Life and Works* p.30.

361 Census of India, 1931, I, p.291.

362 Ibid.

363 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, *Personal Dairy*, July 30, 1923.

364 *JKA*, File No: 32/G-13 of 1936.

365 *The Muslim Chronicle*, weekly, July 2, 1926.

366 Secretary, Anjuman-i-Hamdard-i-Islam to Superintendent of Police, Kashmir, July 7, 1924; *JKA*, File No:J-66 of 1924.

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Kashmir Arya Samaj enjoyed the patronage of the Dogra rulers. Maharaja Hari Singh himself had developed close links with the Arya Samaj movement.[367] The *samaj* was included in the list of recipients of family donation of the Maharaja.[368] The influence of Arya Samaj on Maharaja Hari Singh is obvious from his last desire by which he donated most of his personal property to Dayananda College Prabandhak Society and Trust.[369]

As already mentioned that superstition, fatalism and tradition had become an integral part of the social life of Kashmiri Pandits. The priests and the astrologers had acquired an important position in the society and they were exerting great influence on the personal and corporate life of the Hindus.[370] In order to initiate a vigorous campaign of social reform to counter the situation, a young section of Kashmiri Pandits organised themselves in a body known as Fraternity Society in 1930.[371] The word was taken from the famous slogan of French revolution 'equality, liberty and fraternity'.[372] Almost all the members of the Fraternity Society had received modern education in Srinagar and outside the State[373] and Prem Nath Bazaz was the king-pin of the society. The other prominent members of the society were Damodhar Bhat,[374] Dina Nath Hanjura,[375] Dr. Saligram Koul,[376] Jia Lal Koul,[377] Mohan Kishen Tikku, T. N. Koul, Dina Nath Bazaz, Shambhu Nath Gurtu, Dawarika Nath Kachru, Dina Nath Dilgir, Radhe Nath Koul,

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367 Harish Chander Vidarthy, *Jammu Aur Kashmir Mein Arya Samaj Ka Itihas*, p.70.

368 Ibid., p.70.

369 Ibid.

370 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.293.

371 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, pp.233-234.

372 Nagin Bazaz, *Ahead of His Times, Prem Nath Bazaz: His Life and Works*, p.31.

373 Rachna Puri, *The Pandit Community of Kashmir*, (unpublished, M.Phil.Thesis). Department of History, Kashmir University, p.47.

374 Later a leading advocate on the revenu side.

375 He was the brother of Damodhar Bhat, retired as a Principal of Higher Secondary School.

376 He had served as the Principal, Medical College and Director of Health Services, Kashmir, for several years.

377 Retired as an employee of Accountant General's Office.

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Ved Lal Dhar and Dina Nath Parimu.[378] Fraternity Society had a progressive and radical outlook. It wanted to modernize the Hindu society in order to enable it to march with the times.

The office of the Fraternity Society was established at Ganpatyar, Srinagar.[379] The society launched a campaign to mobilize public opinion in favour of the eradication of social evils. The members of the society used to hold meetings at various places at least twice a week and invited prominent educationists, intellectuals and poets to address them. The prominent personalities who addressed these meetings were Master Zinda Koul, Mr. Shridhar Koul Duloo and Shanker Pandit.[380] In their lectures they stressed on widow marriage, abolition of caste system and child marriage, female education, discard of superstition and, above all, development of a modern approach to life. The presence of a few Pandit women in its meetings heralded a new era in the history of Kashmir.[381] The workers of the Fraternity Society moved from one locality to the other and exhorted the Kashmiri Pandits to curtail expenditure on the marriage ceremonies and to give up dowry system. To enforce social reforms they even resorted to picketing.[382] It fought to get a law passed by the State that would legitimize widow-marriage.[383] But in this matter it faced a stiff resentment and opposition from Dharma Sabha – a socio-reform movement of the conservative Pandits led by Amar Nath Kak.[384]

The Yuvak Sabha founded by Prem Nath Chikan was the most important socio-religious organisation of Kashmiri Pandits. There were two reasons that led to the formation of Yuvak Sabha. The first reason was that a few non-state subjects – Punjabi Hindus, had illegally occupied a piece of land, which originally belonged to the temple Shivalaya at Gurubazar, Srinagar. The Kashmiri Pandits wanted to

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378 Retired as Principal of Higher Secondary School, and settled in Bombay.

379 Information gathered during the course of an interview of Shambhu Nath Bhan by Ghulam Hassan Khan; July, 1973.

380 Interview of Mohan Kishan Tickku by Ghulam Hassan Khan.

381 Radha Kumud Mukerji, *Women in Ancient India*, pp.5-6.

382 Interview of R.K. Kak by Ghulam Hassan Khan.

383 Nagin Bazaz, *Ahead of His Times, Prem Nath Bazaz: His Life and Works*, p.236.

384 Rachina Puri, *The Pandit Community of Kashmir*, (unpublished, M.Phil. Thesis), Department of History, University of Kashmir, p.239.

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annex the land to the temple. Second, many religious places of the Hindus, then in dilapidated conditions, needed to be set right so that *Patshalas* could be started there for imparting religious education and instruction to Hindu children in Hindi and Sanskrit.[385]

During the political disturbances of 1931, the Kashmiri Pandits began to think in terms of a united political organisation. They thought it advisable to join Yuvak Sabha because it had already been registered by the State. The first organisation to join the *sabha* was the Fraternity Society. Soon the other groups followed suit. The members of the Fraternity Society gave the *sabha* definite shape by transforming its non-political character into a political one with a well-thought-out programme.[386] The Yuvak Sabha became thus a common political forum of all Kashmiri Pandits. It emerged as a combined body of both the conservatives and radicals and played a reactionary role during the course of Kashmir freedom struggle.[387] The prominent members of the Yuvak Sabha were Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, Pandit Moti Lal Saraf, Pandit Janardhan Teng, Pandit Shridhar Koul Duloo, Pandit Amar Nath Piala, Pandit Damodhar Bhat, Pandit Janki Nath, Pandit Shambhu Nath Bhan[388] and Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz.[389] The aims and objectives of Yuvak Sabha were: [390]

> a) Looking after, protecting and pleading the cause and rights of Kashmiri Pandits; (b) urging upon the Government to see that the law and order was maintained in the State and assisting the authorities in enforcing the same; (c) infusing the spirit of patriotism among Kashmiri Pandits and helping the Maharaja in maintaining the State against the anti-state elements; (d) working for the social uplift of the Kashmiri Pandits; (e) pleading the cause of female education among the Pandits; (f) protecting and looking after the

385 Information gathered in an interview with Shri Vedlal Dhar, Advocate, by Ghulam Hassan Khan.

386 Ibid.

387 For the reactionary role played by the communal minded pandits under the banner of Yuvak Sabha against the appointment of Glancy Commission (1932) see Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, pp.161-162.

388 Interview of Pandit Kishap Bandhu by Ghulam Hassan Khan.

389 Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz writes that in 1931 Yuvak Sabha jumped into politics and he was chosen as its President. For details see Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.151-152.

390 Ghulam Hassan Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p.59.

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religious places of the Hindus, and fighting for the restoration of those religious places of Hindu community which had been under dispute for a long time; (g) helping the members of the Hindu community to find its rightful place and status in the State by means of presenting to the Government their demands through deputations, memorials and other lawful means; (h) preserving and promoting the growth and development of Hindu culture, art and religion and (i) striving for a peaceful life in the State.

Socio-Religious Movements among Kashmiri Muslims

It was during the early twenties of the twentieth century that the Muslims of Kashmir came into the arena of socio-religious reform activities. The fundamental aim of their socio-religious reform movements was to acquaint the Muslims with the reasons of their stagnation that had kept them in a state of backwardness for centuries together. The credit for creating the atmosphere of socio-religious reform among the Muslims goes to Mirwaiz dynasty.[391] It produced a dynamic personality namely Ghulam Rasool Shah,[392] imbued with modern ideas. He like Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was bestirred into action by the backwardness of his community. Even today he is popularly called as Sir Sayyid-i-Kashmir by the Kashmiri Muslims.[393] He believed that a good education on Western lines, supported by wise religious teachings of the Holy Quran would produce young Muslims of capacity and character.[394]

In 1889 he laid the foundation of a Primary School, the first of its kind in entire Kashmir, at Rajveri Kadal in Srinagar.[395] Sixteen years after Moulvi Ghulam Rasool Shah with the consultations, guidance and cooperation of some eminent and influential Muslims of Punjab founded Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam in 1905.[396]

In 1906 the formal nomination and selection for the different positions was made. Moulvi Ghulam Rasool Shah was unanimously

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391 Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, *Khasusi Shumara*, 1981, pp.27-28; Muhammad-ud-din-Fauq, *Tahrik-i-Aqwam-i-Kashmir*, vol.II, pp.391-392.

392 See Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, *Khasusi Shumara*, pp.8-9.

393 Based on the information collected during the course of interviews with the living elders of Srinagar city.

394 Mohammad Ishaq Kahn, *History of Srinagar*, p.139.

395 Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, *Khasusi Shumara*, p.2.

396 *JKA*, File No: J-88 of 1924.

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selected as the President of the *anjuman* (Association). The remaining office bearers of the anjuman were: (1) Khawaja Hassan Shah Naqeshbandi– Vice-President, Ist. (2)Khawaja Muhammad Shah Naqeshbandi – Vice-President, 2nd. (3) Moulvi Atiqullah – General Secretary. (4)Munshi Kamal – Joint Secretary. (5) Moulvi Ahamd Ullah – Financial Secretary. (6) Munshi Sharif Ali Khan – Joint Financial Secretary. (7)Shaikh Muhammad Hussain – Accountant. (8) Khawaja Aziz-ud-din – Examiner. (9) Malik Sher Muhammad – Secretary Nazim-i-Talim.

Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam played an extraordinary role in the socio-religious welfare of the Muslim community of Kashmir. The constructive programme of the *anjuman* is reflected from its aims and objectives, which are precisely mentioned as under:[397]

> a) To equip the youth with modern education along with Islamic teachings; (b) to make adequate arrangements for the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah; (c) to provide right kind of leadership in the cultural, economic and moral affairs; (d) to project the character of the Muslims reflecting the value system of Islam; (e) to create a balance between modern education and religion; (f) to unite the Muslims by creating among them the sense of being an intermarry community and (g) to strengthen the cause of universal peace and brotherhood by promoting spiritual and moral consciousness.

In addition to the dynamic role which the *anjuman* played in the spread of modern education among both men and women, it had to its credit the social reformation of the community.[398] Centuries of sufferings had made the Muslim masses lazy, lethargic and tradition bound. They were reeling under numerous unhealthy rituals and customs. Thus, there was a need to reform the community in order to bring it to the level of modernism. The man who thought in terms of social reform was Mirza Ghulam Mustafa, a member of the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam. It was in 1922 that he brought the issue of social reform before the *anjuman*.[399] This gave the *anjuman* an opportunity "to think in terms of social reform, and a Social Reformation Committee was appointed for the purpose of removing social evils

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397 Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, *Khasusi Shumara* 1981, p.1.

398 Muhammad-ud-din Fauq, *Tarikh-i-Aqwam-i-Kashmir*, vol.II, p.433.

399 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, *Personal Diary*, June 27,1931, Item 2.

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from the Muslim community."[400] In a meeting held on 5 October 1922 the *anjuman* decided to prepare a list of all evil customs prevalent in various sections of the Muslim society. The task was assigned to Munshi Assadullah.[401] Another meeting related to social reform was held on 8 July 1923. Among other prominent members of the *anjuman*, Shaikh Sadiq Hussain, Rais-i-Amritsar, attended it.[402] An important step towards the social reform was the meeting of the Social Reform Committee, held on 20 December 1925, at the residence of Mirza Ghulam Mustafa. After due deliberations, the following reforms were recommended:[403]

> a) *Fatiah* ceremony (performed as ritual after the burial of a person) held on Friday's be abolished; (b) only two dishes of meat and two dishes of vegetables be served to guests on weddings; (c) the parents of the bride and the bridegroom should give dowry worth 25 to 400 rupees; (d) only the relatives of the concerned should be invited to a feast on the occasion of the circumcision ceremony; the barber's fee for performing the circumcision operation should be met by the parents alone and no invitee should be allowed to contribute to it and (e) evil customs connected with marriage such as sending *khabars* (paying a courtesy call to the bride and giving gifts in cash and kind) to the in-laws of a bride be stopped.

The purpose of introducing such reforms was to save extravagant expenditure on marriages and various other types of ceremonies. Spending money lavishly on such occasions had become a habit of the people, with the result the poor had often to borrow money to defray the expenses incurred on such occasions. The *anjuman* directed its members to preach these reforms to the Muslim masses at public meetings in every shrine and mosque at the time of prayers. Also, a tract on social reform entitled *dastur-ul-amal* was compiled and published under the signatures of the leaders of the *anjuman*. It was distributed among the people.[404]

It was most probably owing to the absence of State patronage since 1819, when Kashmir came under the Sikh rule, that the Muslim priests had encouraged various types of unnecessary rituals because of economic reasons. In order to avoid these rituals, the *anjuman* had

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400 Ibid., July 4, 1922, Item 3.

401 Ibid.

402 Ibid.

403 Ibid.

404 Ghulam Hassan Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p.65.

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stressed on the doctrine of *tawheed*.[405] Stress on *tawheed* meant, a belief in oneness of God, the propagation of the doctrine type of religion, where there was no role for intermediaries between God and man, and no scope for social disparities.

The struggle for securing to the Muslim subjects of the State their rights formed an important part of the programme of Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam after 1920. By this time the *anjuman* had spread its wings over a considerable area in the field of Muslim education. It had produced a good number of educated young men to play their role in the welfare of the Muslim community. Towards the beginning of the twenties of the twentieth century, the leaders of the *anjuman* remained busy in taking up with the Government the issues related to educational welfare of the Kashmiri Muslims, their representation in Government services, disputes over religious places, share in law making bodies and the economic backwardness.[406] Thus, the *anjuman* played a significant role in the reconstruction of the Muslim society of Kashmir.

In Maharaja Ranbir Singh's reign Hussain Batku, a resident of Srinagar, attempted to preach 'wahabi' doctrines.[407] He raised a cry against *pir-muridi*, superstitions, rituals and denounced the worship of *asthans* (shrines). But the opposition of the local *mullahs* was so strong that the Maharaja was compelled to issue orders for Hussain's expulsion from the State.[408] Hussain Batku's mission was carried on by Sabzar Shah and Sidique Hassan Khan.[409] They made the Mohalla of Nariwara in Srinagar a centre of their religious activities.[410] Later, in the twenties of the twentieth century, the 'wahabis' founded the Anjuman-i-Ahl-i-Hadis[411], which came in the lime-light under the

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405 Speech delivered by Moulvi Anwar Shah, Lolabi, at the Second Annual Session of the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, *Halat-o-Rou-i-Dad*, p.30.

406 Pir Muhammad Afzal Makhdoomi, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, p.62; *The Aina*, weeky, October 30, 1970,p.4.

407 Mohammad Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar*, p.107.

408 Ibid.

409 Ibid.

410 Ibid.

411 The Census of 1921 (Part I, p.64) points to the existence of the *anjuman* in Srinagar even before 1920. But during my interviews with the contemporary *ulema* I came to know that the *anjuman* was founded in about 1925. Among its founder members were Haji Muhammad Shahdad,

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inspiring leadership of Moulvi Ghulam Nabi Mubaraki and Moulvi Nur-ud-Din. The *anjuman's* official organ was the *Muslim*. The paper aimed at the extirpation of social evils from the Muslim community.[412]

The 'wahabis' represented an advanced school of Muslim thought. They confined themselves to the text of Holy Quran and Hadith (tradition) and relied upon individual judgement for their interpretation. They stood for reform in Muslim manners, customs and life, and aimed at the elimination of superstitions and rituals. They led emphasis on the oneness of God, denounced the role of *pirs* and advocated the abolition of un-Islamic practices among the Muslims. The preachings of the 'wahabis' brought them into conflict with a great majority of the conservatives. For many years a heated debate took place in some mosques of Srinagar among the orthodox and the 'wahabis' with regard to the religious issues. It is interesting to note that the 'wahabis' were contemptuously dubbed as *kuttas*[413] by the orthodox. So devoted were the Muslim masses to the priests that even the leaders of the freedom movement had to seek the support of Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf Shah[414] for using religious places for the mass mobilization purposes. Though a very large majority of the Muslims of Srinagar remained uninfluenced, the reformers brought about a change in the attitude of many. Even many *pirs* and *Rishis* (custodians of shrines) admitted that 'wahabi' ideas were gaining ground in Kashmir.[415] Besides the 'wahabis', another sect of the Muslims known as Ahmadiyas[416] under

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Ghulam Shah Naqeeb, Ahmed Ullah Shahdad, Abdul Aziz Chikan and Moulvi Ghulam Nabi Mubaraki.

412 *The Muslim*, Shaban, 1359H; July 2, 1941; Oct.2, 1941; Mach 2, 1942; Sept.16, 1943.

413 Before 1931 two chief *mullahs* of Srinagar Mir Waiz Jamia Masjid and Mirwaiz Hamadani yielded great social and religious influence on the Muslim society. For details see *Daughters of Vitasta*, p.242; *The Statesman*, June 11, 1946; *Ranbir*, Nov.16, 1942.

414 It is pertinent to note that in December 1930, Muslims of Srinagar in the absence of Mirwaiz Ahmad Ullah's directive did not actively respond to the call of the Muslim Kashmiri Conference of Lahore to rise against the Government. But after the death of Ahmed Ullah in March 1931 his successor Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah supported the aims and objectives of the Reading Room Party.

415 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.235.

416 See Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in Indian*, pp.137-138.

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the leadership of Moulvi Abdullah[417] also did a lot of propaganda against the rituals.

As mentioned earlier, there were two ill-famed centres of prostitution in Srinagar e.g. Tashwan and Maisuma. The sale of young girls in Kashmir to established houses of ill-fame in Srinagar and India was both protected and encouraged by the Dogra rulers.[418] It is a sorry commentary on the leaders of the socio-religious and political movements of Kashmir that the sad plight of the poor and young girls at these centres did not engage their attention. Never did they raise any voice against the houses of ill-fame and immoral trafficking in women. Credit, however, goes to a gallant barber of Srinagar who waged a crusade against many houses of ill-fame situated at Maisuma. He was popularly known as Muhammad Subhan Naed.[419] "He would stand up in the streets and preach, and at night, with some of his friends, would stand outside those houses trying the men visitors from entering (Sic.)". "He wrote pamphlets to show up this cruel trafficking, and distributed hundreds of them in the city."[420]

The selfless services of the valiant Subhan Naed bore fruit, when in 1934 the State Assembly passed an Act suppressing immoral trafficking in women. It provided penalties for persons who kept, managed or allowed the use of any place as a brothel or procure women or girls for prostitution or live upon the earnings of prostitutes or trafficking in women and children. Those who solicited in public places, encouraged or abetted seduction or prostitution of minor girls were also penalized.[421]

Another organisation, which played a remarkable role in the reformation of degenerated Muslim society, was Anjuman-i-Hamadard-i-Islam. The credit for organising this *anjuman* goes to a few non-local Punjabi Muslims. The *anjuman* was organised during 1939 and the dynamic force behind it was Babu Muhammad Ibrahim.[422] The fundamental aim of this *anjuman* was to uplift the Muslim community of Kashmir whose conditions in general were miserable and pitiable.

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417 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, p.243.

418 Robert Thorp, *Cashmere Misgovernment* (typed copy), p.35.

419 Tyndale Biscoe, *Autobiography*, pp. 259-260.

420 Ibid.

421 Census of India, 1941, I, p.6.

422 *The Statesman*, August 16,1931.

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The *anjuman* had an orphanage for free board and lodge for those orphan children who were admitted to it. It also made arrangements for providing them education and vocational training. In order to meet the expenses, the *anjuman* collected donations[423] and membership fee. It also received financial assistance from the office of the All India Muslim Kashmiri Conference, Lahore.[424] The primary objective of this *anjuman* was to persuade the Muslims of Kashmir to receive modern education. It stressed upon them to develop the habit of self-help by raising funds for this purpose. It also mobilized the Muslims for securing technical and commercial education.[425] The aims and objectives of the *anjuman* include:[426]

> a) To bear all the expenses for the burial of the dead bodies of the Muslims thrown into the mortuary after these were declared heirless in the hospitals; (b) to provide scholarships to those Muslim students who had passed the Middle standard but could not continue their education due to poverty and (c) to help orphan Muslim children in their education and vocation by admitting them to the orphanage established by the *anjuman*.

Among other socio-religious organisations of the Muslim community was the Anjuman-i-Tahaffuz-i-Nimaz-wa-Satr-i-Masturat.[427] It came into existence in 1923 with the efforts of Azad Quraishi, Hakim Muhammad Quraishi and Ghulam Muhammad Alvi. It is to be noted that the *anjuman* was purely a religious body. It had no concern with politics.[428] The main object of the *anjuman* was to educate the Muslims in general and those living in villages in particular with the tenets of Islam and to help them in eradicating social evils. The aims and objectives of the *anjuman* were as under:[429]

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423 *Aljamiat*, Delhi, August 29,1931. See also *The Statesman*, August 16,1931.

424 Letter to the Editor by Muhammad Ibrahim, Secretary Rander Young Mohammadan Brotherhood, Surat Distt. *Aljamiat*, Delhi, August 28,1931. It is to be noted that this organisation was founded by the Punjabi Muslims in order to ameliorate the conditions of their Kashmiri brethren.

425 Ibid.

426 *The Statesman*, August 15,1931.

427 The name of the association itself implies that its function was to make Muslims to offer regular prayers and make them wear dress according to Islamic tenets.

428 *Akhbar-i-Kashmir*, Lahore, July 25, 1925.

429 Ibid.

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> a) The Muslims should strictly observe the prayers, and the Muslim women should wear decent clothes, that is, they should properly cover their parts of the body; (b) the Muslims should be instructed both in religious and secular education either through preaching or through schools opened for this purpose and (c) all trafficking in women should be stopped and the marriage contracts should be duly registered in court of law.

No doubt religious reformation was a major concern of these movements, but none of them was exclusively religious in character. Given the inter-connection between religious beliefs and social practices, religious reformation was a necessary pre-requisite for social reform. The social life of the Hindus as well as the Muslims was deeply influenced by religious tenets. Religion was the dominant ideology of the times and it was not possible to undertake any social action without coming to grips with it. The perspectives on reform were not always influenced by religious consideration. A rational and secular outlook was very much evident in posing an alternative to prevalent social practices. The arguments of the reformers were mainly based on their effects on society. The cultural-ideological struggle represented by these movements, was an integral part of evolving the political consciousness in Kashmir. This was so because it was instrumental in bringing about the initial intellectual and cultural break, which made a new vision of the future possible. It was also a part of the resistance against imperial cultural and ideological hegemony.

g) External Support

> We are extremely grateful to the Muslims of India, in general, and those of Punjab, in particular, for their unparalleled sacrifices and total sympathy in course of our trials and tribulations. We are also thankful to the Muslim press of the Subcontinent for having so effectively presented our case.
>
> Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah

Owing to the persistent oppression Kashmir was subjected to, right from Mughal occupation to the Dogra rule, it had become the habit of the oppressed Kashmiris to flee to Punjab in search of relieved conditions.[430] Besides, as Punjab was an entrepot of trade between Kashmir and India, Lahore and other cities of Punjab had attracted a good number of Kashmiri merchants to benefit themselves from the

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430 JRASB, Vol. XXIII, No. 1; Moorcraft, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab, in Ladakh and Kashmir*, p.67.

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lucrative business opportunities. In the nineties of the nineteenth century, there were about one lakh Kashmiris residing in different parts of Punjab.[431] Though these people were, no doubt, permanent subjects of Punjab, they had never forgotten their emotional relationship with their mother country.[432] The following couplet of Dr. Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal – one among the prominent personalities of Punjabi Muslims of Kashmiri origin, amply bears out the unflagging and deep-rooted emotional attachment of these people with their mother country:[433]

The pearl of Eden turned into a jewel but away from its bed,
As if civet get separated from the deer,
I have come to India after deserting Kashmir,
As if the nightingale made its nest away from abode.

In comparison to the Kashmiri Muslims, the Punjabi Muslims of Kashmiri origin were educationally, politically and economically better placed. It was they who blazed the trail for freedom in Kashmir by initiating the process of voicing the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims. By submitting memorandums to the Maharajas and the British Government, highlighting the grievances of the Kashmiris through press, pleading on behalf of the Kashmiris in official circles and courts, guiding them in the techniques and methods of freedom struggle, and providing them moral and financial support the Punjabi Muslims took active part in freeing Kashmir from the chains of imperialism.

It is a matter of great surprise that though the freedom movement of India had started long back, there was no political organisation in Kashmir as late as 1931. However, we find the political organizations being formed in Punjab to represent the cause of the Kashmiri Muslims as early as 1896. On 18th February 1896, the Punjabi Muslims of Kashmiri origin formed an association named Anjuman-i-Kashmiri-Mussalmanan-i-Lahore, aimed at ameliorating the social, political and economic conditions of Kashmiri Muslims. In addition to Allama Iqbal, its founder members were Mian Karim Baksh and his son Mian Shams-ud-Din, Moulvi Ahmad-ud-Din and Khawaja Rahim Baksh.[434] The first meeting of the Anjuman-i-Kashmiri-

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431 Imperial Gazetter of India, 1909, Jammu and Kashmir vide Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight- For Freedom,* p.298.

432 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah , *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.102.

433 Sabir Aafaqi, *Iqbal Aur Kashmīr,* pp.38-39.

434 Mirza Shafiq Hussain, *Dastawaizāt*, pp.7-8.

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Mussalmanan-i-Lahore was held in February 1896.[435] Thrilled with joy over the formation of the *anjuman* Dr. Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal exclaimed:[436]

> *After landing in the galaxy I was greeted by stars,*
> *As if jewels put together in a string,*
> *Ah, what a union of companions!*
> *Patriots meeting one another in a strange land.*

The Anjuman-i-Kashmiri-Mussalmanan-i-Lahore was revived in 1901 under the name of Muslim Kashmiri Conference.[337] In 1912 we find Muslim Kashmiri Conference strongly condemning the State for its policy of giving preference to non-state subjects over the state subjects in Government services.[438] During the twenties of the twentieth century this organisation assumed all India character, and was, therefore, called as All India Kashmiri Conference.[439] The branches of this organisation were opened at Lahore, Amritsar, Gujranwala, Siyalkot, Gujrat and Rawalpindi.[440] It often convened public meetings in which the socio-economic disabilities of Kashmiri Muslims were highlighted. The *anjuman* worked for the recruitment of Kashmiris in army and demanded for the restoration of proprietorship of land to the peasants.[441] When Sad-ud-Din Shawl was exiled from Kashmir, it evoked a strong reaction among Muslims. The Anjuman-i-Kashmiri-Mussalmanan, Gujranwala, passed the following resolution in a meeting held on 20 June 1925 at the residence of Babu Atta Muhammad:[442]

> This meeting of the Anjuman-i-Kashmiri-Mussalmanan, Gujranwalla, emphatically protestes against the Kashmir Government's orders of exile of Khawaja Sad-ud-Din Shawl from Kashmir, the confiscation of the *jagir* of Khawaja Hassan Shah Naqeshbandi and the removal of Khawaja Nur Shah Naqeshbandi by means of forced resignation from his services.

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435 Shabnam Qayum, *Kashmir Ka Siyasī Inqilāb*, vol.I, pp.43-44.

436 Sabir Aafaqi, *Iqbal Aur Kashmīr*, p.40.

337 Mirza Shafiq Hussain, *Dastawaizāt*, p.7.

438 *JKA*, File No. 254 of 1912.

439 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.450.

440 Shabnam Qayum, *Kashmir Ka Siyasī Inqilāb*, vol.I, pp.43-44.

441 Mirza Shafiq Hussain, , *Dastawaizāt*, pp.7-8.

442 *Akhbar-i-Kashmir*, Lahore, June 28, 1925.

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In view of such developments Maharaja Hari Singh, who had ascended the throne after the death of Maharaja Pratab Singh, started a policy of conciliation and compromise towards the Muslims.[443] He lifted the ban on Sad-ud-Din Shawl and permitted him to return home. The State also lifted ban on all those leaders who had submitted the memorandum of 1924, to seek Government offices.

The news of 13 July 1931 regarding the indiscriminate and unprovoked firing outside the Central Jail, Srinagar, reached Lahore on the evening of 16 July and was published in the Muslim press on the 17th morning. Muslim individuals and organizations from all over India sent about seven to eight thousand protest telegrams to the Maharaja. Thousands of telegrams were also addressed to the Viceroy urging immediate intervention.[444] The publication of this news sent a wave of indignation among the Muslims all over India, resulting into protest meetings and processions almost in every city, town and important village, expressing their sympathy and solidarity with the Muslims of Kashmir and calling upon the British Government to depose Hari Singh and take the State under its direct administration. Press statements were issued by all prominent Muslim leaders condemning the outrage and assuring the Kashmiri Muslims of their full support.[445]

In order to co-ordinate these activities in various parts of India Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Amir of the Jamat-i-Ahmadiya took initiative in convening a meeting of some leading Muslims at Simla on 25 July 1931 to consider the situation. It was in this historical meeting that the foundation of All India Kashmir Committee was laid.[446] The members of the Committee expressed their grave concern

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443 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, *Personal Diary*, October 8, 1925.

444 *Inqilab*, Lahore, August 23, 1931.

445 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.454.

446 *Inqilab*, Lahore, July 29, 1931; The meeting was held at Fair View, the Simla residence of Sir Zulfikar Ali Khan of Malirkotla and the prominent among those who attended the meeting were: 1) Sir Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal (2) Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad (3) Sir Zulfikar Ali Khan (4) Khawaja Hassan Nizami (5) Nawab Ibrahim Ali Khan of Kunjpur (6) Sayyid Mohsin Shah, Advocate (7) Khan Bahadur Shaikh Rahim Baksh (8) Moulana Muhammad Ismail Ghaznavi (9) Moulana Abdul Rahim Darad (10) Moulana Noor-ul-Haq (11) Sayyid Muhammad Habib and (12) Sahibzada Abdul Latif.

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over the mass killings and assured the Muslims of Kashmir of their full moral and material support in their struggle.[447] The Committee passed the following resolutions:[448]

> a) To bring pressure on the Government of India to help the Kashmiris in securing their elementary rights of humanity hitherto denied to them. (b) To make the ruler conscious of the real affairs of his State. (c) To request the Viceroy and the Foreign Department of the Government of India to appoint an independent commission of enquiry in Kashmir affairs. (d)To make the Kashmir affairs known to the entire civilized world by writing books on Kashmir and to make vide circulation of the same in England.

In response to a call given by the All India Kashmir Committee, Kashmir Day was observed on August 14, 1931 with tremendous enthusiasm both within[449] and outside the State.[450] Outside Kashmir it was celebrated in Punjab,[451] Ferozpur,[452] Delhi,[453] Gorkpur,[454] Bombay,[455] Calcutta,[456] and Simla.[457] Public meetings and processions were the main features of the celebrations. The resolutions passed in the meetings held throughout the country on Kashmir Day generally related to:[458]

> i) The removal of restrictions on conversion from Hinduism to Islam and the withdrawal of disabilities with regard to rights of inheritance and guardianship over the wife and children of a Hindu converted to Islam. (ii) Securing the people of Kashmir their basic rights of the freedom of speech and expression, the freedom of forming associations, the freedom of press and platform and the proprietary rights in land to the peasants in

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447 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.102.

448 *Statesman*, Calcutta, July 28, 1931.

449 At this day complete *hartal* was observed in the Valley and a public meeting was called at Martyrs Graveyard which was also attended by the children of the martyrs of 13 July 1931. For details see, Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.142.

450 Ibid.

451 *Alfazl*, Qadian, August 27, 1931.

452 *Aljamiat*, Delhi, August 24, 1931.

453 *Statesman*, Calcutta, August 16, 1931.

454 *Aljamiat*, Delhi, August 28, 1931.

455 *The Indian Nation*, August 18, 1931.

456 *Statesman*, Calcutta, August 15, 1931.

457 Ibid.

458 *Alfazl*, Qadian, November 19, 1931.

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Kashmir as enjoyed by the peasants of Punjab. (iii) Securing seventy per cent of the appointments in the State services to the Muslims. (iv) Reinstating all officials who had been either dismissed or suspended from their services or whose promotion had been stopped or who were otherwise punished in connection with the political agitation.

The Committee also arranged the publication of Kashmir news in British newspapers such as *Ring Post*, *Sunday Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, London. It supported the demand of Kashmiri Muslims for the expulsion of Hari Krishan Koul, the Prime Minister, and the introduction of reforms.[459] It also deputed a number of lawyers to defend hundreds of Muslims who were being tried on charges of murder and rioting during the incident of 13 July 1931.[460] This is not all. The draft of demands which the Kashmiri Muslim representatives submitted to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931 was revised and redrafted by All India Kashmir Committee which deputed Moulana Yaqub Khan, later editor of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, Moulana Muhammad Ismail Ghaznavi and Moulana Abdul Rahim Dard to Srinagar to assist Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and his colleagues in bringing about any changes "that may be deemed necessary". It took them several days to revise the draft.[461] The Kashmir Committee provided not only moral but also material assistance to Kashmiri Muslims. It was with the help of the Kashmir Committee that the Kashmiri Muslims could present their case before the Midelton Commission on December 5, 1931.[462] It is also important to record that the Kashmir Committee members played an important role in the formation of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932.[463]

Equally rather more important role, which the non-resident Kashmiris played in bringing about political consciousness among the people of Kashmir and helping them to redress their grievances, was their effort to highlight their problems and inculcating among

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459 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.460.

460 Ibid. See also Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.141.

461 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.419.

462 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.141.

463 Ibid., p.157. The meeting of the Kashmiri Muslim leaders which decided to form All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was also attended by the members of All India Kashmir Committee.

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them the sense of patriotism through the press.[464] It may not be out of place to mention that there were a number of dailies and weeklies published by the Punjabi Muslims to represent the cause of Kashmiri Muslims. The prominent among these were: *Kashmir Gazettee, Kashmiri Magazine, Punj-e-faulad, Tarikat, Rehnuma-i-Kashmir, Maktoob-i-Kashmir, Nizam, Kashmiri, Inqilab, Mazlūm-i-Kashmir, Alfazl, Sun Rise, Kashmiri Mussalman and Siyasat.*

The earliest weekly, which championed the Kashmir cause was *Kashmir Gazette*. The credit for the publication of this organ goes to Jan Muhammad Ganai, a migrant Kashmiri Muslim.[465] When the Anjuman-i-Kashmiri-Mussalmanan-i-Lahore became defunct in 1897, it was because of the motivating articles and editorials contained in *Kashmir Gazette* that the *anjuman* was revived in 1901.[466] Moreover, it published the patriotic poems written by the Indian Muslim poets, which gave a clarion call to Kashmiri nationalism.[467] Muhammad-ud-Din Fauq, one of the Kashmiri migrants settled in a village of Siyalkot, brought out *Panj-i-Faulad*. This paper ceased to publish in 1906 and then he brought out a monthly *Kashmiri Magazine,* which subsequently became a weekly. He brought out a new paper *Tarikat* and a journal *Nizam* in 1914 and 1918, respectively. In addition to this, he also published *Rahnuma-i-Kashmir*.[468] In 1926 another weekly named *Kashmiri* was started from Lahore. Hundreds of its copies were sold in the State, particularly in the Valley. It contained articles and poems calling upon the Muslims to educate their children, bring about social reforms and to change their fatalistic outlook.[469] Among other Muslim organs that pleaded the Kashmir cause forcefully, the name of *Inqilab*

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464 For the wholehearted support extended to the nascent political struggle of the Kashmiri Muslims by the Punjabi Muslims, see Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, pp.454-460. Shocked over the credulity of Kashmiris and their political poverty even in twenties of the twentieth century, Sir Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal says:

O' God, breathe a new life into Kashmiris,
So that ashes revive as embers.

See *Anwar-i-Iqbal*, vide Sabir Aafaqi, *Iqbal Aur Kashmir*, p.213.

465 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.450.

466 Sabir Aafaqi, *Iqbal Aur Kashmīr*, p.38.

467 Ibid.

468 Ibid., pp. 42-43.

469 *Ranbir*, Weekly, Jammu, vol.III, pp.47-48.

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published from Lahore is worth mentioning. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah says that it was through this organ that he published statistical information to demonstrate the under-representation of the Kashmiri Muslims in the State services.[470] The daily was so dedicated to the cause of Kashmiri Muslims that the Government of Kashmir imposed ban on its entry into the Valley.[471] While highlighting the role of *Inqilab* in bringing about political consciousness among the Kashmiri Muslims Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah writes:[472]

> The editors of *Inqilab*, published from Lahore, Moulana Mehar and Moulana Salik pleaded our case and boosted our morale right from the beginning and raised their pen to expose the tyrannies of Dogra rule.

From 1931 onwards the Lahore Muslim press started a vigorous campaign against the Maharaja and his administration. "Newspapers containing articles written in the words of fire were sent by thousands into the State".[473] It would not be beside the point to mention that it was because of the Punjabi Muslim press that the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims were brought before the eyes of the world. To quote Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah:[474]

> It was during these days that we started to acquaint the world with the condition of the Kashmiris in general and those of the Muslims in particular. We dispatched our articles to Urdu organs of Lahore and thus for the first time brought the dark-side of the conditions of Kashmir in the notice of the outside world.

Needless to say, the Kashmir freedom movement for a long time, at least upto 1938, remained under the guidance of the Punjabi Muslims.[475] No wonder, therefore, we find Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah often going to Punjab for consultations with Punjabi Muslim leaders.[476] The dominant role played by the Punjabi Muslims in Kashmir politics can be gauged by the fact that the Maharaja often

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470 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.57-58.

471 Ibid., pp.271-272.

472 Ibid., p.102.

473 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.151.

474 Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.48-49.

475 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.156.

476 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah , *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.181.

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sought support of the Punjabi Muslims for the restoration of normalcy in Kashmir.[477] It should also be remembered that the political mentors of the Kashmiri leadership that emerged in early thirties of the twentieth century were the Punjabi Muslims of Kashmiri origin. Sir Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal was the front-ranking ideologue of Kashmiri Muslim leaders, and according to Shaikh, he himself was much impressed by the ideology of Iqbal.[478]

The Muslim poets of Punjab also played a significant role in inculcating the sense of patriotism among the Kashmiri Muslims. Among the poets, who dedicated themselves to the cause of Kashmiri Muslims, the name of Allama Iqbal is worth mentioning. He was probably the first Muslim poet who in his poetry highlighted the oppressed conditions of Kashmiri Muslims and gave them a clarion call of political awakening. Right from his studentship he dedicated his poetic capabilities for the cause of Kashmiri Muslims. In the first session of the first known political organisation formed by migrant Muslims – Anjuman-i-Kashmiri-Mussalmanan-i-Lahore, Iqbal who was then a student of B.A. read a poem containing twenty-seven stanzas. Because of the paucity of space we shall quote only three of its verses:[479]

Times revolution had made me sad,
I was alive but like an encaged bird of prey,
It is good that a union had ultimately sprung,
Now to undo bad luck is a certainty,
He who is your nations enemy these days,
Iqbal, make him a theme of your composition.

Allama Iqbal continued to boost the morale of Punjabi Muslims through his patriotic poems he used to recite in the meetings of the Anjuman-i-Kashmir-Mussalman-i-Lahore. The following verses of a poem read in one of its meetings may be cited as an example:[480]

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477 Ibid., pp.103-104. See also Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*, pp.464-465.

478 Ibid; pp.40-41; Not only Shaikh but we also find other Kashmiri leaders like Mirwaiz Ahmad Ullah Hamadani who had been exiled from the Valley on account of participating in the agitation of Young Mens Muslim Association (1934), which the association had launched to pressurize the State for implementing Glancy Commission recommendations, often visiting Allama Iqbal. For details see *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.191.

479 Sabir Aafaqi, *Iqbal Aur Kashmīr*, pp.37-38.

480 Ibid., p.38.

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The clutches of tyranny and ignorance have made us wretched,
As if a clipper has clipped our wings,
O God, destroy the hand of tyranny which has,
Suppressed the soul of the freedom of Kashmir.

To be precise, right from 1896 till his death Iqbal championed the Kashmir cause; infused the sense of patriotism among the Kashmiris and provided them with intellectual and political guidance to fight against the Dogra Raj. During the later phase of his life he developed more and more interest in the freedom of Kashmir. In his *Javid Nama* he had symbolically sent a message of love for freedom and liberty to the Kashmiris through a great saint of Kashmir, Sayyid Ali Hamdani. Likewise, we find him putting seventeen poems in the mouth of an assumed Kashmiri – Mulahzada Lolabi, through which he educates the Kashmiris about love for liberty.[481] One is tempted to quote these verses of *Saqi Nama*, he wrote in 1921, while staying in Kashmir. In these verses he gives a call to the Kashmiris to rise from the deep slumber of ignorance:[482]

Kashmiris are slaves by temperament,
They worship gravestones as idols,
Their mind is devoid of great ideas,
Unaware of their ego, they are ashamed of themselves,
With their blood and sweat they weave silk into the master's gown,
Yet wear tattered clothes themselves,
O' God breath a new life into Kashmiris,
So that ashes revive as embers.

Besides Allama Iqbal, there were many other poets who devoted their poetic faculties to the cause of the Kashmiri Muslims. Among them the names of Amin Hazeen, Chirag Hasrat, Agha Abdul Karim Shorish and Hafiz Jalandhari are worth-mentioning. It is worthwhile to quote a few patriotic verses of Hafiz Jalandhari in which he highlights the State terrorism and also encourages the Kashmiri freedom fighters:[483]

The face of Kashmir is aglow with red flowers,
As if tulips sprung from martyr's blood,
The armymen of Maharaja are playing havoc everywhere,
O' ye courageous, seek guidance from these lamps,
And go ahead echoing God's name.

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481 Ibid., p.41.

482 Ibid., pp.60-61.

483 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.266.

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We have already mentioned the role of All India Kashmir Committee in the politics of Kashmir. This committee was the creation of Ahmadiyas.[484] The Ahmadiyas gave top priority to the political events in Kashmir in the columns of their official organs such as *Alfazl* and *Sunrise*.[485] They were pro-British[486] and believed in British intervention in Kashmir affairs.[487] They were deadly against the appointment of commissions of enquiry by the Maharaja. Such commissions, they argued, functioned with utmost partiality and under the official dictations. This is why All India Kashmir Committee rejected the findings of the Dalal and Midelton Commissions as unsatisfactory, partial and unacceptable to the Muslims of Kashmir.[488]

The Majilis Ahrar-i-Islam-i-Hind was a religious-cum-political organisation founded on the ruins of the Khilafat Movement in Punjab. It was a group of Muslim leaders who had participated in Khilafat Movement of India (1920) and who very often cooperated with Indian National Congress in its normal activities. The members of the Majilis Ahrar immediately after their release from prison in July 1931 were attracted by the Kashmir movement.[489] In order to demonstrate their sympathies with the Kashmiri Muslims, the Ahrars sent *jathas* (bands) of volunteers to the State with the intention of creating disturbances and inviting the attention of the world towards the sufferings of Kashmiri Muslims.[490] It is to be noted that when the Muslim representatives presented their draft of demands to Maharaja Hari Singh on his 36th birthday in 1931; it were the members of Majilis-i-Ahrar who assisted them in framing this memorandum.[491]

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484 Malik Fazel Hussain, *Kashmir Aur Dogra Raj*,pp.262-263. See also *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.102-103.

485 Ghulam Hassan Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p.200.

486 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.111; Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-for Freedom*, vol. I, p.462.

487 *JKA*, D.O. Letter from C.C. Garbet, No.11162-SB, October 5, 1931; File 423 of 1931.

488 *Alfazl*, Qadian, November 1, 1931.

489 Aziz-ur-Rehman, *Rais-ul-Ahrar Moulana Habib-ur-Rehman Ludhianavi-Aur-Hindustan-i-Jung-i-Azadī*, p.144.

490 *NAI*, File No.13/23-31 of 1931.

491 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.129-130.

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The aspirations of the Kashmiri Muslims were also supported by some other social and political organisations of India. In 1913 All India Muslim Educational Conference sent a deputation headed by Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan and presented a memorandum to the Maharaja, requesting him to provide his Muslim subjects with facilities for education.[492] Likewise we find All India Muslim League pleading the cause of Kashmiri Muslims. In the annual sessions of the Muslim League the problems and aspirations of Kashmiri Muslims figured predominantly, which provided great moral and political support to the people of Kashmir for changing their fate. The following resolution of the League, which was passed in its 15th annual session at Lahore, is a case in point:[493]

> The All India Muslim League condemns the discriminatory attitude of the Kashmir Darbar towards the Kashmiri Muslims. The League, therefore, appoints a Sub-committee to look after the educational and political interests of Kashmiri Muslims. In addition to this the Sub-committee is being entrusted with bringing pressure on the Kashmir Darbar for providing due share to Kashmiri Muslims in Government services.

The above account which is of course incomplete, however, proves beyond doubt that had Kashmiris not received varied kinds of support from the Indian Muslims in general and those of Punjab in particular, the movement for freedom which was already late would have been further delayed, if not averted.

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492 *JKA*, File No.217/ F-9 of 1913.

493 *Ranbir*, Weekly, Jammu, Har 11, 1981 (Samvat).

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Formation of Muslim Conference

> The hoisting of this green flag with crescent opens a new epoch in the history of Kashmir
>
> Wali Ullah Zain-ul-Abidin

Notwithstanding the fact that the Muslims were groaning under the oppressive rule of the Dogras, they, however, failed to launch an organized struggle against it till 1931. It was partly because of the Dogra autocracy, which imposed blanket ban on the formation of political organizations and partly because of mass illiteracy and the resultant lack of consciousness of the people. It is true that when the oppression crossed limits, the working class did sometimes show passive reaction[1] and sometimes even revolted openly as for instance the *shawlbaf* revolt of 1865, but these revolts lacked organized character. It was during the twenties of the twentieth century that the signs of political consciousness became manifest, consequent upon the growing literacy rate among the Kashmiri Muslims and the support extended to them by their sympathizers particularly the Muslims of Lahore. The Silk factory revolt of 1924 and the secret submission of a memorandum by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading, the Indian viceroy, wherein they demanded the redressal of socio-economic and political grievances, were the obvious fallouts of the perceptive consciousness among the Kashmiri Muslims. However, instead of perceiving the emergence of growing resentment among the Muslims particularly among the educated youth and providing a healing touch to them, the Maharaja tightened screws of oppressive and autocratic rule, when he persecuted the prominent Muslims who had submitted the memorandum of 1924 and severely punished Silk factory

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1 For instance the peasantry refused to pay the heavy taxes and to cultivate the land. See Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.404.

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workers. There was no source of expression[2] and ban was even imposed on the entry of Indian Muslim press in Kashmir.[3] This suffocating situation moved even some high officials who were having a humanistic bent of mind. Among them Sir Albion Banerji, a Bengali Brahman who was a senior minister of the Executive Council of the Maharaja, will be remembered in the history of Kashmir. While not tolerating the inhuman attitude meted out to the Kashmiri Muslims, he resigned. Explaining the reasons of his resignation before pressmen, he exposed the sectarian and autocratic character of the Dogra rule.[4] His statement was published in English press on 16 March 1929 creating a havoc.[5] This fearless criticism of the Dogra Raj by its own senior minister shook the Maharaja's autocratic rule and encouraged the educated Muslim youth of the Valley to come out for putting up an organised fight against the policies of the Dogra Raj.[6] The itch for freedom had become so strong that the persecuting measures of the rulers[7] and their policy to launch a disinformation campaign through their favourities – both Hindus and Muslims, to vainly prove their rule as the most enlightened one, could not succeed in averting it.[8]

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2 *JKA*, File No.68/102-C of 1924.

3 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.116; Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.82.

4 Statement of Sir Albion Banerji, the Foreign and Political Minister of Jammu and Kashmir State vide Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kahmir*, pp.140-141.

5 Sir Albion Banerji's statement created uproar and shook the very foundations of the State administration. See Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.45-46.

6 Sir Albion Banerji's words "produced a stir in the young minds. He may fitly be said to have awakened them from the slumber. The political awakening owes its origin to his pen", wrote the Resident of Kashmir; See *The Eastern Times*, February 18, 1932. See also Jalali's note entitled "Whiter Kashmir" (J. L. Jalali's collections).

7 For persecuting measures against the nascent political consciousness of the people see Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, pp.71-72.

8 Ibid., p.74. In this context, the rejoinder published on behalf of Agha Sayyid Hussain, General Sumandar Khan, Col. Ghulam Ali Shah and Mirza Ghulam Mustafa to disapprove of the realities about Kashmir Government, expressed by Sir Albion Banerji before the press conference at Lahore, on March 15, 1929 is worth mentioning.

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Since the formation of political associations was banned the Muslim educated youth, who had returned from various Indian universities, formed what is known as the Reading Room Party[9] in the garb of which they wanted a platform to bring all the educated youth together for devising ways and means to fight out injustice done to the Muslim community in general, and the educated Muslim youth in particular.[10] The Reading Room members succeeded in attracting a large number of educated Muslim youth and consequent upon this a committee was constituted to run the Reading Room Party on a solid basis. The President and General Secretary of this committee were Muhammad Rajab and Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, respectively. The prominent members of the committee included Hakim Ali Prizada, Ghulam Rasool, Pir Ahmad Shah Fazli, Hakim Ghulam Murtaza, Qazi Saif-ud-Din, Moulvi Bashir Ahmad and Mufti Jalal-ud-Din.[11] The Reading Room Party focussed its attention on publishing the horrifying tale of Kashmiri Muslims through Indian and foreign press.[12]

The Reading Room Party also submitted a memorandum to the Regency Council headed by Mr. Wakefield.[13] The Government took cognizance of the memorandum and invited the leaders of the Party for a discussion.[14] Though the Government did nothing substantial to redress the grievances of the educated Muslims, the latter still felt encouraged by

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9 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.148.

10 "In fact the establishment of the Reading Room was an excuse. The basic purpose was that under its garb we could get together and an opportunity of discussing different matters would emerge. This did happen and we held discussions on the problems of Government services and the conditions prevailing in the country. We would burst into tears while thinking over the conditions prevailing in Kashmir". For details see Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.48.

11 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.77. The move to establish this political cell had the moral and financial support of Khawaja Sad-ud-Din Shawl, Moulvi Abdullah Vakil, Agha Sayyid Hussain Jalali, Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, Moulvi Zia-ud-Din, Khawaja Assadullah Vakil and a few other sympathizers including Pir Muhammad Maqbool Gilani. The Reading Room Party had an underground revolutionary wing led by Ghulam Nabi Gilkar and Muhammad Rajab.

12 Ibid., p.82.

13 Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, *Kashmakash*, pp.69-70.

14 Ibid.

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making their presentation before the Council.[15] The Government was also impressed by the arguments put forth by the Reading Room Party members.[16] The Reading Room Party continued its press campaign against the policies of the Maharaja with the help of Punjabi Muslim intellectuals and editors.[17] It also highlighted the discriminatory attitude of the State towards the Muslim community particularly in its recruitment policy through press. It not only made the members of this Party popular among the people but also accelerated the pace of consciousness among the Kashmiri Muslims.[18]

The leaders of the Party also organised secret public meetings in which they exhorted the people to cultivate a spirit of sacrifice without which freedom would be a distant dream. For example, in one of his speeches, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah in an attempt to appeal to the emotions of his audience said:[19]

> I say that the only alternative to get rid of this deplorable situation is that Muslims shall have to remain ready for any kind of sacrifice. As long as the fear of jail torture and persecution will cultivate cowardliness among the people, there is no hope for the redressal of the problems of Kashmiri Muslims. I also say that for a test I will offer myself in the first instance and God willing, I shall be ready to face any kind of sacrifice.

To the good fortune of the Reading Room Party, many sensational developments took place one after another helping it to mobilize masses openly for which it had been waiting anxiously since its inception. These events were: ban on *Eid khutba* in Jammu on April 29, 1931,[20] *tauhin-i-Quran* (disrespect of the Holy Quran) in Jammu[21] and ban on Friday

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15 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.53-54.

16 Ibid. Mr. Wakefield had even acknowledged the soundness of the arguments put forth by the Reading Room party.

17 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.355.

18 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.58-59.

19 Ibid., p.62.

20 On April 29, 1931, when the Muslims were busy in a prayer meeting on the Eid-Day, a Sub Inspector of police Babu Khem Chand tried to stop the *imam* from reciting *khutba*. The Sub Inspector warned the *imam* that he should stop delivering a political speech. The Muslims took his behaviour as an affront and a hue and cry was raised throughout the State against the incident; *The Kashmiri Musalman*, Lahore, Weekly, May 10, 1931.

21 It so happened that on the morning of July 4, 1931, at an hour when according to the standing orders all bedding should have been rolled up

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prayers in a village of Jammu[22] by the supporters of Dogra rule.[23] This created strong resentment and the Muslim leaders did not lose the chance to cash it for mobilizing the people against the *Raj*.[24] While co-operating with the Young Men's Muslim Association of Jammu the Reading Room Party distributed the posters published by the former, exhorting the Muslims to take out processions and to observe *hartals*.[25] This naturally incurred the wrath of the Government and a worker of the Party Muhammad Ismail was arrested.[26] The arrest created a strong reaction among the masses who had already grown sentimental because of the Jammu incidents. The Muslim leaders came out openly and delivered fierce speeches against the Government.[27] When the Government failed to persuade the leaders, it let loose its reign of persecution. One of its victims was Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah who was dismissed from Government service.[28] It further increased the popularity of the Shaikh and other leaders of the Reading Room Party among the masses who too developed a sense of sacrifice by these incidents.[29]

The dismissal of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and the popularity he gained within Kashmir emboldened him further to take up the cause of Kashmiri Muslims. He organised public meetings in different parts

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and put away by the constables of the jail guards at the Central Jail, Jammu, a Muslim constable Fazel-ud-Din was found sitting on his bedding reading the Holy Quran. The Head Constable, Lakha Ram remonstrated with him about rolling up his bedding. When he threw the bedding on his box, the *Punjsura* fell upon the ground; *The Indian Nation*, Patna, July 10, 1931.

22 Another incident occurred at Dogre in Sambha Tahsil about 15 miles from Jammu. There the Hindus and Muslims jointly used a water tank. In order to offer their Eid prayers, the Muslims began to draw water from the tank, as had been practice earlier for performing the ablutions. But the Hindus raised an objection, which resulted into a minor clash; G.R. Raghavan, *The Warning in Kashmir*, p.72.

23 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.68

24 Ibid.

25 Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, *Kashmakash*, p.68.

26 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.68

27 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, *Personal Diary*, June 9, 1931, Item I.

28 *Inqilab*, Lahore, July 4, 1931.

29 Muhammad Yousuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight -For Freedom*, vol.I, pp.367-368.

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of Srinagar city which used to be attended by thousands of people.[30] It may not be out of place to mention that in this endeavour he received whole-hearted support from Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah – the Mirwaiz of the time.[31] One such big gathering was of 21 June 1931 which was organised at Khanqahi Mualla, Srinagar. "This gathering", in the words of the Shaikh, "should be considered the formal inauguration of the freedom movement of Kashmir".[32] It was at this historic gathering that a representative body of the Muslims was elected. It comprised of seven prominent Muslims of Kashmir – Khawaja Sad-ud-Din Shawl, Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah, Mirwaiz Atiqullah Hamadani, Agha Sayyid Hussain Shah Jalali, Khawaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and Shahab-ud-Din.[33]

At the end of the Khanqahi Mualla meeting, an outsider, Abdul Qadir, a butler of an European official delivered an emotional speech against the Government.[34] He was arrested by the police and tried in Central Jail on 13th July 1931. Before the trial started, a large crowd gathered outside the prison walls. When the Session Judge and other officials arrived, the mob became uncontrollable and some of the Muslims forced their way into the outer compound of the jail. The District Magistrate who had also come by this time, ordered the arrest of some of the ring leaders of the mob. The arrests angered the crowd who demanded the release of their leaders, and when the demand was not met, the crowd became restive and threw stones. The Magistrate on duty ordered to open fire, which resulted into the cold-blooded massacre of twenty-two Muslims, and scores of demonstrators received bullet injuries.[35] This caused great uproar in the Valley. One of the unfortunate fall-outs of the 13 July public reaction was the occurrence of minor communal riot, which created a temporary gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims.[36]

"Historically and politically", to quote Prem Nath Bazaz, "13th July 1931 was the most important day in the annals of contemporary

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30 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.79.

31 Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, *Kashmakash*, pp.68-69.

32 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.82.

33 Muhammad Yousuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight -For Freedom*, vol.I, p.373.

34 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.96.

35 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.153.

36 Ghulam Hassan Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p.133.

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Kashmir. From this day the struggle for independence and freedom in the most modern sense started openly."[37] The incident of 13 July shook the whole State including the administration. It unnerved the Maharaja.[38] The arrest of the Muslim representatives soon after the jail incident added fuel to the fire of wild excitement, which held the people in its grip. As it was, 13 July 1931, saw the beginning of the gigantic force behind the mass movement.[39]

The publication of the 13 July news in the Lahore Muslim press sent a wave of indignation all over India, resulting in protest meetings and processions in almost every city, town and important village, expressing sympathy and solidarity with the Muslims of Kashmir and calling upon the British Government to depose Hari Singh and take the State under its direct administration. Press statements were issued by all prominent Muslim leaders condemning the outrage and assuring Kashmiri Muslims of their full support.[40]

In order to coordinate these activities in various parts of India, Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, Amir of the Jamat-i-Ahmadiya took initiative and convened a meeting of some leading Muslims at Simla on 15 July 1931 to discuss the developments in Kashmir.[41] It was in this historic meeting that the foundation of All India Kashmir Committee was laid which later on played a dynamic role in Kashmir politics.[42] In response to the call given by the Kashmir Committee, Kashmir Day was celebrated both within and outside the Valley on 14 August 1931. On this day complete *hartal* was observed in the Valley and a mass meeting was called at Martyrs Graveyard in Srinagar, which was attended by thousands of men, women and children.[43] Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah in his address paid tributes to the martyrs of 13

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37 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.154.

38 Ibid., p.155.

39 Ibid.

40 Muslim individuals and organisations from all over India sent about seven to eight thousand protest telegrams to the Maharaja. Thousands of telegrams were also addressed to the Viceroy urging immediate intervention; *Inqilab*, Lahore, August 12 and 23 , 1931.

41 *Inqilab*, Lahore, July 29, 1931.

42 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.102-103.

43 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, pp.142-143.

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July and directed the masses to follow their path with patience and courage. He started his lecture with the following verses:[44]

O ye heavens, thy commotion had only,
Deprived the dead nation of its body and soul,
O ye ancient heavens those whom we fed with our heart, blood,
Have only been dissolved into a river of blood,
The multi-coloured flowers of this beautiful garden of Kashmir,
Have been buried unnoticed and ruthlessly.
The wives of paragon Muslims have been molested,
The enemies of Islam have set in motion a storm.

When the Government failed to check the growing wave of resentment, it sought the support of Punjabi Muslims for the restoration of peace in the Valley. It was at the request of Kashmir Darbar that Sayyid Mehar Shah, a prominent Punjabi Muslim came to Kashmir and it was due to his efforts that an accord was signed between the Government and the Muslim representatives.[45] The accord and the consequent truce were used by the Muslim leaders to strengthen the roots of the movement among the masses as they undertook extensive tours of the Valley during this period.[46] Soon after signing the accord, pro-establishment elements launched a disinformation movement against the Muslim representatives and argued that the Government had purchased them. The propaganda definitely bore fruit as it created tremendous resentment among the people[47], which besides other things speaks in unmistakable terms of the consciousness that had developed at the gross-roots level. The public mood prompted Muslim leaders to convene a public meeting at Jamia Masjid on 28 August 1931 to convince the people about their pro-people stand.[48] After a few days Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah along with Khawaja Sad-ud-Din Shawl and Khawaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai visited Baramulla, Sopore and

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44 Ibid.

45 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.104 -105.

46 Ibid., pp.106-107.

47 Ibid., p.108.

48 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, *Personal Diary*, August 28, 1931. To undo the propaganda launched by the pro-government elements in order to malign the leaders who had signed the accord, Shaikh Abdullah said, "is it not a victory for us (Kashmiri Muslim) that an autocratic Government came down to sign an accord with your representatives?" See *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.110.

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Islamabad. During these tours, peace committees were formed which later on helped in launching an organised struggle.[49]

It was during this period that preparations for the annual session of Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam were made and Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah took upon himself the task of collecting funds from the people for this purpose.[50] In the garb of raising funds he organised public meetings in which he criticized the policies of the State. In reaction to this he was again arrested on 21 December 1931.[51] The arrest of the Shaikh, who had by now become a popular leader of the Muslim masses, evoked widespread resentment among the people of the Valley. Processions were taken out and *hartals* observed in every nook and corner of Kashmir.[52] In order to maintain the tempo of the movement, a War Council was formed under the 'dictatorship' of Mufti Jalal-ud-Din.[53] However, no sooner did the public gathering, which elected the War Council came out of Khanqahi Mualla, than Mufti Jalal-ud-Din was arrested and the public was fired upon resulting in four deaths of innocent Muslims. In reaction to it people took to streets at Gaw Kadal and Basant Bagh. They too were fired upon by the army causing eight casualties. The reaction to the atrocities committed by the army was felt far and wide in the Valley. Public demonstrations were held at different places and, sadly enough, the mob was charged at Anantnag and Shopian.[54]

The open revolt of the people continued unabated though no stone was left unturned by the Government to suppress it. Moulvi Muhammad Yousuf Shah, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir gave a call for *jehad* which evoked a tremendous response. The people came out with axes, swords, daggers and whatever tools that were available to them in their respective homes. The 'armed' demonstrators assembled at Khanyar, Srinagar.[55] The mood of the people unnerved the

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49 Ibid., pp. 110-111.

50 Ibid., pp.111-112.

51 *NAI*/File No.12-c/31, September 28, 1931.

52 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Kashmir Ka Gandhi*, p.74.

53 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight - For Freedom*, vol.I, p.402.

54 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.113-114.

55 A press note issued by the Government on September 25, 1931 substantiates the fact. The press note said, "on September 24, 1931 more than fifty thousand Muslims assembled at Khanyar, Srinagar, to stop the

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Government. Good sense prevailed upon the Government when it restrained its forces from taking any action against the processionists, which would have otherwise resulted in mass massacre.[56]

Encouraged by the mass support, the Muslim leadership got emboldened to launch an organized struggle by forming a political organization for the purpose. Accordingly, they consulted the Jammu leaders[57] as well as the leaders of the Kashmir Committee who assured them of their full cooperation in this regard.[58] To give a practical shape to the idea a committee was set up. It drafted a constitution of the proposed organization and decided to name it as All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference.[59] The committee also adopted a flag for the organization, which consisted of green cloth with a crescent and a star representing Muslim community and a piece of white cloth representing the minorities.[60] The inaugural session was held on 14, 15 and 16 October 1932 at the historic Pathar Masjid, Srinagar, under the presidentship of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah.[61] It was a unique gathering especially in the sense that all Muslims, irrespective of their religious differences or social distinction, sat shoulder to shoulder on the same platform with the common object of providing Muslims with a single political organisation. A platform, fifteen feet high from the ground was constructed in the spacious ground of the Masjid on which sat about two hundred representatives and about a hundred press

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arrest of that agitator, against whom warrant of arrest had been issued. The mob possessed axes, swords, spears, sticks, acid and gun-powder. Fifteen thousand people guarded the site during night. About three hundred were armed with guns and had come from outside, so that they could participate in violent activities. The police is searching them". Press Note dated September 25, 1931.

56 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.116.

57 Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, *Kashmakash*, p.118.

58 It is pertinent to mention that All India Kashmir Committee dispatched Moulana Abdul Rahim Dard, Moulvi Ismail Ghaznavi, Sayyid Habib Shah, Editor Daily Siyasat and Mr. Zahur Ahmed to Srinagar to assist in making the necessary arrangements. Financial assistance was also made available along with a car to facilitate the movement of workers. See Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.482.

59 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.246.

60 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight – For Freedom*, vol.I, p.483.

61 *Alfazl*, Qadian, October 25, 1932.

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representatives and observers.[62] The ground adjacent to the mosque, which was later utilized for the construction of Mujahid Manzil, the party headquarters, was converted into a part of the *pandal* to accommodate unprecedented audience.[63] Hundreds of house-boats were hired to house the delegates. The session was attended by about three lakh men, women and children who turned the *pandal* into a place of pilgrimage.[64] The flag hoisting ceremony was performed on 14 October by Waliullah Zain-ul-Abidin, a representative of the All India Kashmir Committee. In his scholarly address to the audience he said:[65]

> The Kashmiris, who were considered a dead nation for three centuries have risen again and are today a living nation. During the last years, they have offered great sacrifices in their struggle for people's demands. The whole world is amazed to see that a nation which had fallen in the abyss of slumber for centuries and the nation which was considered uncivilized has again obtained its place in the community of nations. Today, the hoisting of this green flag with crescent opens a new epoch in the history of Kashmir. As such, it is the duty of the Kashmiris to see that it remains hoisted always. This flag is the harbinger of love, peace and brotherhood among all the communities living in the State and is the guarantor of peace, progress and happiness for all subjects of the Maharaja.

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62 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.482.

63 Ibid., p.483.

64 Ibid.

65 Speech of Waliullah Zain-ul-Abidin, a Punjabi Muslim leader on the flag hoisting ceremony of Muslim Conference vide *Alfazl*, Qadian, October 25, 1932.

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Communal Divide

> By virtue of their religious and of the common interests as also by reason of their deep and abiding sense of loyalty, Kashmiri Pandits are identical with Government. Kashmiri Pandits are proud of this.
>
> (Pandit Kishap Bandhu)

One of the important reasons that proved a bottleneck in the way of forging a common political platform by the Muslims and Hindus, was a deep wave of suspicion and bitterness, that run at the bottom of the social relations of the two communities. The antagonism between the two communities was mainly the fall out of the communalization of the State administration as well as the feudal production relations which threw up Hindus as a community belonging to the exploiting class and the Muslims as exploited, a fact about which we have given details in the preceding pages. Besides, the gulf between the two communities was further widened by the reactionary policy of the Hindus especially the elite who openly opposed the nascent freedom movement initiated by the Muslims. The sporadic quarrels that erupted because of the claims and counter claims put forth by the two communities over a few religious places further widened the gulf between them.

The politics of the non-Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir began as a reaction to the mass movement, which the Muslims launched against the economic injustice and political servility of the Dogra rule. From the very beginning, the attitude of the non-Muslims towards this movement had been one of hostility and antagonism. They characterized the movement as 'communal'. According to them, the political consciousness among the Muslims stemmed from the "pro-Muslim policies" of the ruler and his Government.[1] They argued that

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1 Ghulam Hassan Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, pp.182-183.

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"pro-Muslim policies of Maharaja Hari Singh" had emboldened the Muslim subjects to rise in revolt against the ruler, in order to get more and more concessions from him. They also opined that C.E. Wakefield, Political and Foreign Minister of Maharaja Hari Singh, was instrumental in carrying out pro-Muslim policies at the cost of Kashmiri Pandits.[2]

With these bizarre notions, the non-Muslims had failed to view the Muslim mass movement in its proper perspective. Instead of appreciating the grievances of the Muslims before and after 1931 agitation, they dubbed them as communalists and looters. In doing this, they "played the historic role of anti-revolution to a finish",[3] but with little success. They also failed to realize that their interests were safe only with the masses. Ignoring that the mass movement had struck deep roots in the soil of the State they completely alienated themselves from it and made efforts to protect their community's interests by identifying themselves with the Government and its machinery. In order to achieve objectives, they set themselves at cross-purposes with the Muslims, trying phrenetically to lessen the political significance of the Muslim movement. Their reactionary role became evident when they requested the Maharaja to amend or repeal the laws regarding the Land Alleviation and the Agriculturists Relief. They made the malicious propaganda that these laws had emboldened the Muslims against their ruler. Their request was, however, rejected by the Maharaja.[4] On occasions they adopted insidious political methods to bring pressure upon the Muslims to give up their agitation but were not successful.

From the very commencement of freedom movement in Kashmir, the Hindu Maha Sabha set its forces of reaction against it. The worst part of the reaction was the role of the Maha Sabha played in provoking the Hindu mind of India against the Muslim subjects of Kashmir whom the Hindu Maha Sabha dubbed as sheer communalists bent upon

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2 Ibid., p.183.

3 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.291. Substantiating the views of Prem Nath Bazaz, Gawasha Lal Koul writes that "the Hindus and Sikhs sided with the Government. If they suffered at Vichernag and Maharajgung during 1931, it was because of their hostile attitude towards freedom struggle." For details see Gawasha Lal Koul, *Kashmir Through the Ages*, p.122.

4 *Statesman*, Calcutta, September 4, 1934.

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destroying the Hindu State of the Maharaja of Kashmir. It was this fear which led the leaders of the *sabha* to serve the Hindu cause by undoing the freedom movement in Kashmir. Even the Maharaja himself obtained the support of Hindu Maha Sabha against the freedom movement launched by his Muslim subjects. In a letter addressed to Maharaja Dr. Moonji, a prominent Mahasabha leader wrote:[5]

> The Hindu Maha Sabha is lonely and forlorn in the midst of big Hindu leaders, wealthy merchants and Rajas and Maharajas. The Kashmir affairs I had hoped would open the eyes of the Hindus but I am disappointed. I am fighting single-handed and I will keep on the fight till the end for the Hindu cause.
>
> Your message which you were to send with your Pandit Sharmaji to my Hotel... may I now again request your Highness to extend to me your promised help and send the amount by cable to my address which is care of Thoms Cook and Sons London or care of India Office, as I have told your Highness I shall require not less than rupees twenty five thousand for propaganda work in England.

Also, the Hindu Maha Sabha organized public meetings and passed resolutions wherein it denounced the Kashmiri Muslims as conspirators against Hindu Raj and enemies of the Hindu subjects of the State. For example, at its Akola Session held on 15 August 1931, the Maha Sabha passed the following resolution:[6]

> The Hindu Maha Sabha looks upon with fear at the fiery propaganda carried on against the Maharaja of Kashmir and at the occurrences of riots, murders, loot and incendiarism. The *sabha* deems that there is a secret conspiracy of influential men working behind the agitation. The Maha Sabha warns the Government of India that in case the outer-interference in the internal affairs of the State is not stopped, a misunderstanding will be created. The Maha Sabha recommends to the Working Committee that a committee of inquiry, to investigate into the matters regarding Kashmir, be appointed and report submitted.

Opposition to the demands, which the Muslims had presented to the Maharaja on October 19, 1931, was another glaring example of the anti-Muslim attitude and political shortsightedness of the native non-Muslims of the State. To start with, the Pandits prided themselves on being the first to have fought for the democratic rights of the people of

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5 Letter dated August 19, 1931, from S.B. Moonji to Maharaja; Moonji papers, Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi.

6 *Aljamiat*, Delhi, August 20, 1931.

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Kashmir. They said that it were they, who had first raised the cry of 'Kashmir for Kashmiris', and had demanded a legislature, a free press and a free platform[7]. But when the Muslims presented the same demands, the Pandits opposed them saying that they were made "avowedly on communal grounds and for communal ends".[8] They went to the extent of preferring the rule of autocracy to the blessings of democratic institutions. They said:[9]

> We should rather do without a free press and a platform of representation than to make our country a hotbed of communal warfare.

By identifying themselves with the Government and rendering every possible service to the repressive machinery of the State the non-Muslims played a reactionary role.[10] The uppermost in their minds was to see the forces of revolution destroyed.[11] The Muslim subjects of the State, according to the Hindu viewpoint, had attained a "position of victors under a Hindu Raj and the urgent need of the time was to stop them from resorting to agitation." The Pandits opposed the release of Muslim political leaders whenever the question was raised with the Government. They demanded that indemnity be imposed upon the Muslims to compensate the financial losses involved in quelling the revolt of 1931 and in establishing the punitive pickets in various locations to guard against recurrence of revolts. Even the Government of India was requested to start proceedings against the Muslim press in India that openly criticized the policies of the Kashmir ruler and his Government.[12] The avowed reactionary policy of Kashmiri Pandits can be inferred from the following objectives of Yuvak Sabha, which the Kashmiri Pandits formed while shunning all ideological differences:[13]

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7 Memorandum presented by Sanatan Dharm Youngmen's Association on behalf of Kashmiri Pandits to His Highness Maharaja Bahadur of Jammu and Kashmir, October 24, 1931.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Commenting on 13 July 1931 incident of Central Jail, Srinagar, Prem Nath Bazaz observed, "the Government and the Hindus were inseparable and the one stood for the other." For details see Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.153.

11 *Statesman*, Calcutta, October 31, 1931.

12 Ibid.

13 An interview of Shambhu Nath Bhat by Ghulam Hassan Khan.

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a) Urging upon the Government to see that the law and order was maintained in the State, and helping the authorities in enforcing the same. (b) Infusing a spirit of patriotism among Kashmiri Pandits and helping the Maharaja in maintaining the State against the anti-state elements.

The Glancy Commission, appointed by the Government in response to the uprising of 1931, made some recommendations for the upliftment of the Muslim masses. It evoked a strong resentment among the Kashmiri Pandits and they launched an agitation known as 'Roti Agitation.'[14] Since lowering of qualifications for appointment – a concession granted in favour of Muslims, would make them eligible for various State services, the Pandits who had monopolized the service sector until then cried, "our bread is being snatched from us".

The Hindus regarded Jammu and Kashmir as a Hindu State. The ruler of this State according to them, "was a remnant of the great Surya Vansha of Sri Ramchanderji, symbol of the ancient Kshatriya Velour, pride of Hindu race and the defender of the Vedic Dharma".[15] With this notion the Hindus thought it their duty to defend the State and the Hindu religion from the Muslim agitation which they characterized as a "mischievous and revolutionary agitation designed, inspired and fermented by a handful of disloyal Muslims in complicity with outside Panislamic propaganda agencies who abhor the idea of a Hindu kingdom in Northern India".[16]

The Kashmiri Pandits failed to recognize the revolutionary character of the movement. They knew that economic necessity drew the Muslims to rise spontaneously against the Government in 1931. But in their zeal to defend the Hindu State from the wrath of revolution, which "aimed at the achievement of democratic rights without driving their ruler out",[17] the Kashmiri Pandits were very eager to see the Muslim movement destroyed root and branch. They did not tire of criticising the emerging leadership of the Muslims. They called the Muslim leaders self-styled who wanted to establish a Muslim dictatorship in the State under which "the Hindus could live in Kashmir

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14 For details about the Roti Agitation see Fida Muhammad Hassnain, *Freedom Struggle in Kashmir*, p.71; Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.213.

15 *The Indian Nation*, Patna, November 1, 1931.

16 Ibid.

17 S.R. Kulkarni, *The Truth and Kashmir*, pp.82-83.

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only as Muslims or at their mercy".[18] Even the communists were not spared; they were suspected by the Pandits to have a strong hand in the agitation.[19]

The Kashmir movement was also dubbed as Panislamic movement by the non-Muslim communalists in British India. The exponents of this thought were Bhai Parmanand and Dr. Moonji of the Hindu Maha Sabha. Sardar Sant Singh, a Sikh leader also contributed to this view. According to these leaders, the movement in Kashmir was a part of the Panislamic movement in India whose origin went back to 1930 session of All India Muslim League at Allahabad when it's President Sir Muhammad Iqbal "pronounced his theory of dividing India into Muslim India and Hindu India and taking the North West part of India for Muslim Confederation".[20]

The communal riot of July 1931[21] further aggravated the Hindu-Muslim antagonism. An unhealthy development of this event was the part played by the non-Muslims in general and the Kashmiri Pandits in particular, who identified themselves with the Government and the armed forces. In the performance of their duties, the soldiers were from time to time guided and accompanied by non-Muslims. The Muslims were subjected to every kind of humiliation, indiscriminate arrests and house searches carried out by the military and the police.[22]

The communal Hindu press of India did no less to widen the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir. It launched a violent campaign against the Kashmiri Muslims who were pleading for the redressal of their grievances. Among the organs, which led this campaign, the names of *Milap, Pratab* and *Tribune* are worth

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18 *Statesman*, Calcutta, October 31, 1931.

19 Ibid.

20 *The Indian Nation*, Patna. November 16, 1931.

21 It so happened that when a procession of Muslims was carrying some injured persons for treatment to the private clinic of Abdul Wahid, after the Central Jail incident of 13 July, a non-Kashmiri Hindu trader, Lala Baghat Krishan Chand passed some derisive remarks on the Muslims and the dead. It became the immediate cause of the communal riot of 1931. For details see, *The Aina*, Weekly, Srinagar, October 30, 1971.

22 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, *Personal Diary,* August 22, 1931.

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mentioning. It is pertinent to quote the observations of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah about the role of these organs:[23]

> There existed no press in the State other than a Hindu organ, *Ranbir*, published from Jammu. It had kept itself alive by praising the autocratic rule of the Maharaja. In addition to it, *Milap, Pratab, Tribune* and some other organs published from Lahore defended the cause of the Maharaja and his Hindu subjects by favouring their fair as well as unfair measures.

The socio-religious reform movements of the period also had a role in creating a gulf between the two communities.[24] In their endeavour to instill a sense of confidence among their respective religious communities, the leaders of these movements sometimes did not even hesitate in criticizing other religions. Thus, besides contributing to the assertion of aggressive religious identities, the religious propaganda even sometimes led to open skirmishes between the two communities leaving little chance for them to come closer to each other. The Arya Samajists did not only embark upon the provocative policy of *shuddi* movement but they also went to the extent of abusing Islam.[25]

The relations between the Hindus and the Muslims were further embittered by the claims and counter claims of each community over certain religious places. These disputes dated back to the year 1893, when a dispute between the two communities arose over a bathing place near a mosque at Alikadal in Srinagar. The Hindus had filed a case in the court of law. However, their claim was dismissed on the ground that there was "no proof in favour of Hindus".[26] After that the Hindus forcibly occupied the place on the authority of the Maharaja's orders, which had been issued secretly. Thus, the Muslims were deprived of the bathing place.

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23 For details about the malacious propaganda of the Hindu communal press against the Kashmir freedom movement see Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.55.

24 The Hindus as well as Muslims of Kashmir organised many socio-religious reform movements in order to reform their respective societies. Among these movements, the important ones were, Arya Samaj, Fraternity Society, Yuvak Sabha, Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, Anjuman-i-Hamdard-i-Islam, and Anjuman-i-Tahaffuz-i-Nimaz-wa-Satri-Masturat.

25 *JKA*, File No. 157-C-11 of 1921.

26 *JKA*, File No. 67-1893.

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The dispute over a piece of land at Nagbal in Islamabad, a famous town fifty-four kilometres away from Srinagar, gave rise to bitter relations between the Hindus and the Muslims in 1924. The Pandits wanted to construct a temple on a piece of land just opposite to a mosque at Nagbal. The Muslims raised an objection on the ground that the land belonged to the mosque. The dispute assumed an ugly shape when the Pandits prevented the Muslims from performing ablution rites on the day of Jummat-ul-vida (last Friday in the month of Ramadhan), which led to a quarrel.[27] However, in June 1924 the Muslims constructed a *thara* (a sort of slab raised from the ground) inspite of the objections raised by the Pandits and without the permission of the authorities. The Pandits, thereupon, informed the Maharaja of the unlawful construction of the *thara,* which they considered was an encroachment on their rights. The Maharaja took a strict action by despatching some army personnel for the demolition of the *thara.*

Thus, ended the Thara-Temple dispute. However, the dispute soured the relations between the Hindus and Muslims in Islamabad. Immediately after the demolition of the *thara*, the Muslim community adopted the technique of boycott against the Pandits.[28] The Kashmiri Pandits in Srinagar immediately reciprocated this. In several meetings held secretly, the Pandits decided to boycott the Muslim shops. In their anti-Muslim campaign, the Pandits were joined by non-Kashmiri non-Muslims also. In open public meetings derogatory remarks were passed against the Muslims and the Muslim kings who had ruled Kashmir in remote past.[29] These developments not only accentuated the acrimony but also widened the gulf of differences between the two communities.

Of all the disputes, the most ugly, however, was the dispute that cropped up over the Khanqahi Mualla, Srinagar. It so happened that on 24 August 1924 a few Kashmiri Pandits, in the early morning hours, found that a few stones had been removed and carried away from Maha Kali, a temple situated at a distance of few yards from the main sanctuary of Khanqahi Mualla on the bank of river Jehlum. They first saw some *khanqahis* and made enquires about the stones. But they expressed their ignorance about the same. The Pandits then informed the police of the theft of the stones from the Maha Kali. In due course

27 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, *Personal Diary,* May 10, 1916.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., May 5, 1924.

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of time they assembled at Ganpatyar, where from they marched in a procession to the Khanqah Shrine. The moment they entered the premises of the shrine, they pelted stones on the sanctuary breaking the glass panes of its windows and demolishing a *thara*, which the Muslims used for the purpose of offering their prayers.[30]

To conclude, the growing Muslim consciousness in early thirties against an autocratic and sectarian power structure dominated by Dogras and Kashmiri Pandits had the potential of straining inter-community relations. But the recommendations of the Glancy Commission (1932) had amply testified to the economic distress of the Kashmiri Muslims[31] as the bedrock of the movement. Religion, however, became the idiom in order to contest or safeguard an inegalitarian and communal power structure. The "syndrome of insecurity" governed the whole politics of Kashmiri Pandits during this period. With the growth of the freedom movement, the Kashmiri Pandits became suspicious of loosing grip over the power structure. They feared that Kashmir freedom movement with its objective of responsible Government would amount to the end of their monopoly in Government services and other landed privileges. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru also condemned their narrow sectarian approach during his visit to Kashmir as late as 1945.[32]

30 Ibid; June 23, 1924.

31 For details about the economic distress of the Kashmiri Muslims see Glancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.100-120.

32 For criticism of Pandit Nehru to political approach of the Kashmiri Pandits see Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.II, p.426.

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Role of Muslim Conference

> The Muslim Conference is not a communal organisation and its existence will prove beneficial to all the communities living in the State. We have declared it at the outset of the struggle that the Kashmir movement is not a communal movement, but for the redress of the grievances of all people.
>
> Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah

a. Nature of the Muslim Conference

Theoretically the Muslim Conference was an organization aimed at safeguarding the interests of the Muslim community alone.[1] But practically it worked like a true secular and progressive political organization with an agenda to represent the cause of the deprived sections of society. It did not work for the unity of the Muslim community alone. But, as will be seen in the following pages, it persistently strived for the unity of all the communities to fight for common issues. As a matter of fact, the formation of a common platform was the inherent desire of the Muslim Conference leadership, which ultimately culminated in the conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference. Similarly, the Muslim Conference did not fight for the political interest of the Muslim community alone. Its main political demands, as will be explicitly made clear in the subsequent pages, were the grant and safeguard of the civil liberties and the establishment of a responsible Government. Such a programme not

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1 See the constitution of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.235.

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only served the interests of the Muslims but the non-Muslims were also equally benefited. The Muslim Conference leadership, in its efforts to muster the support of the non-Muslims for joining the struggle, repeatedly reminded them of the boons which each community got by getting different concessions from the Government as a result of the blood shed by the Muslims.[2]

In the same vein, the Muslim Conference did not crave for the economic and social upliftment of the Muslims alone. Its struggle for the welfare of peasants and labourers was not meant for the peasants and labourers of any particular community. If in Kashmir Valley the peasants and labourers particularly consisted of Muslims, in Jammu province the peasant and labour-class mainly belonged to non-Muslim community. Therefore, the socio-economic programme of the Muslim Conference had a class rather than communal character. The leadership of the Conference was fully aware that among the non-Muslims only a small section belonged to the privileged class, whereas the majority belonged to the oppressed class.[3] No doubt, it constantly expressed resentment against the under-representation of Muslims in Government services. But it was more a humane rather than a communal demand as the Muslims were deprived of their rights mainly on religious grounds. An organisation whose objective was to work for the overall development of a country could not loose sight of the problems faced by the people owing to the retrograde policies of the State, and in case of Kashmir, those of Muslims who were deprived of every patronage right from 1819.[4] It was named as Muslim Conference because the Muslim community was mainly suffering under the Dogra regime and the non-Muslims were not ready to join any such movement that would work for forcing the Government to change its policies, to say least of overthrowing the *Raj*. Right from the first day of the formation of the Muslim Conference the leaders publically declared the secular nature of the Conference and invited the non-Muslims to join it. In the very inaugural session of the Conference, the President affirmed:[5]

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2 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.298.

3 Ibid.

4 It was during this year that Kashmir came under the Sikh rule.

5 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the First Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 17, 1932 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.222.

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> Our movement is not directed against the minorities. I assure all of my countrymen, be they Hindus or Sikhs that we shall always try to redress their grievances. But they must also respect our just rights.

It is, however, true that the Conference was blurred by the idioms that were used by the leadership to woo the people by infusing among them religious fervour. Not unoften the Muslim masses were reminded of the Quranic injunctions and the usefulness of following them in letter and spirit. For instance, in the first Presidential address of the Muslim Conference, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah reminded the audience:[6]

> As long as the people of this nation obeyed the commands of Almighty God and served their fellow beings in real terms, He came to their rescue and rewarded them with all success. But when they forgot Him, He dealt with them according to His law.

The demands of the Muslim Conference were not revolutionary in nature. The programme and activities of Muslim Conference leadership bore a close resemblance with those of the early Indian nationalists. However, the main difference between the two was that whereas the former had an unshakable faith in the role of the masses, the latter had a narrow social basis because of their reliance on the 'benevolence' of the British. The leaders of the Conference made no boons to prove that they were loyal to the *Raj* and did not want complete freedom. Their objective was to ensure the establishment of a responsible Government to seek the redressal of the grievances of the masses. In this context it is pertinent to quote the following words of the first presidential address of the Muslim Conference:[7]

> I also want to make it clear that we have no grievances against the person of Maharaja Bahadur. Instead, we are faithful to him in every respect. Our demands can never be called anti-Government. In every civilized country the king always provides some rights to his subjects at his sweet will and the subjects often demand for more rights. But in spite of that their subjects are treated loyal and there is no doubt about their loyalty. The real faithfulness is that the ruler of the time should be acquainted with the aspirations and wishes of his subjects.

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6 Ibid; pp.219-220.

7 Ibid; p.222.

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Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, a veteran leader of the Conference also rejected the allegation that the Muslim Conference was aimed at overthrowing the Dogra rule. In his presidential address to the annual session of the Muslim Conference held on 27 October 1935, he asserted:[8]

> Some selfish officials and people who are not concerned with the welfare of the State vainly tried to make the Maharaja believe that the Muslims are against him and their sole concern is to turn the tables of his Government. In reply to this I want to tell them that Islam does not allow us to turn against the rulers but it teaches us obedience of the rulers. Then, how is it possible that the Muslims as subjects of His Highness would disobey him?

As pointed out earlier, constitutional reform was an integral feature of the programme of Muslim Conference. The leaders of the Conference were highly committed to democratic values and as such they wanted that the common masses through their elected representatives should have a vital role in shaping the State policy. They were eager enough to reform the decadent and corrupt administration of the State. To quote Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas:[9]

> It is true that we want the establishment of the *Swaraj* (responsible Government) in the State. The present mal-administration of the Government should come to an end and the Kashmir should virtually become like a paradise.

There is no denying the fact that the demands of Muslim Conference leaders were moderate but occasionally the methodology they preached was of extremist nature, as they exhorted their countrymen to remain ready for any kind of sacrifice. To quote Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas:[10]

> The way crops need sunlight to ripen for harvesting and the gardens need water for maintaining their greenery, likewise to keep a nation alive, the blood of martyrs is prerequisite. The movements nourished on the blood of martyrs are bound to succeed. Thus, the sacrifices offered by the martyrs of Kashmir

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8 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.383.

9 Ibid; pp.377-378.

10 Ibid.

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for us are nothing short of a miracle of Christ. And their sacred blood lends us succour to lead us to our goal.

Also, the Muslim Conference was not a middle class organisation as its programme and activities were aimed at serving the interests of the common masses than those of upper and middle classes. From the very beginning the Conference adopted a pro-poor and pro-people stance. It fervently called upon the labourers, artisans and craftsmen to join the movement and to fight for their interests.[11]

b. Split of the Conference

While Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah was in jail for the third time, Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah started criticizing him in a subtle manner. He had kept himself aloof from the main stream of Muslim political thought.[12] But on the occasion of the inaugural session of the Muslim Conference he had shun his differences and participated in the session.[13] It was in 1933 that Mirwaiz parted his ways with the Muslim Conference leadership and started a separate organisation called the Azad Muslim Conference.[14] However, as the new organisation adopted a pro-government attitude, it died a natural death within a few years.[15]

There were several reasons that created a gulf between the two leaders and ultimately resulted into the split of Muslim Conference. The policy of divide and rule adopted by the British Indian Government against the Indian national movement was also followed by the rulers of the Princely States. The formation of the Muslim Conference had caused a serious challenge to the despotic rule of the Maharaja. Therefore, the Government wanted to create dissensions in the ranks of Muslim Conference in order to sabotage the nascent freedom movement. For this purpose it utilized the services of the privileged individuals both from the Muslim and the non-Muslim communities.[16] These people not only played a reactionary role but they always attempted to create dissensions among the leadership. The British

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11 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.303-304.

12 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.482.

13 Ibid.

14 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I. pp.290-291.

15 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol. I, p.492.

16 Ibid., p.487.

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imperialists in their policy of divide and rule against the Indian nationalism had resorted to the method of pampering the reactionaries by rewarding them with different concessions and favours.[17] Following the foot steps of its white masters the Dogra Government rewarded the Mirwaiz with a *jagir* worth Rs.600 and a royal *khilaat* consisting of two rolls of English *makhmal,* each measuring nine yards, four rolls of China silk, a silver tray and a shawl.[18] When the news became public the Mirwaiz was severely criticized and his action condemned as a betrayal to the movement. According to Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, "the Mirwaiz was himself an honest man of simple thinking whose heart throbbed, for the Muslims and their abject conditions, as much as that of any other Muslim leader, but the tragedy was that he was of weak resolve and hence amendable to the powerful lobby of vested interests, who, for their own ends, desired a cleavage between him and Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah."[19] The split of the Muslim Conference divided the Muslims of Srinagar and its peripheries into two hostile camps and thus caused a severe damage to the Muslim interests. The followers of the Mirwaiz were called *bakra* and those of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah *sher* and the clashes between the two factions became the order of the day.[20]

The idea of floating a separate party by the Mirwaiz was not also devoid of psychological reasons. The sudden but growing popularity of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah was exploited by certain reactionary elements, some times at the behest of the Government to create a feeling of jealousy and mistrust in the mind of the Mirwaiz. Whenever both appeared together in public Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah was the centre of biggest attraction and greater ovation. It was but natural that it should have created bitterness in the mind of the Mirwaiz whose family only a year ago was the most powerful and influential in the Valley. Moreover, the Ahmadiyas used to send financial assistance for the

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17 For details see Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle For Independence 1857-1947*, pp.416-417.

18 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight- For Freedom,* vol.I, p.488.

19 Ibid., pp.487 and 492.

20 For the ravages of *sher-bakra* clashes see Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, *Kashmakash,* pp.129-130; Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.185-186.

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support of the movement in the name of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, which also became the bone of contention between the two leaders.[21]

c. Social Welfare Programme

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, a significant development took place in Kashmir before the formation of the Muslim Conference. It was the appointment of an Enquiry Commission under B.J.Glancy on 12 November 1931. The purpose of the Commission was to enquire into the grievances of the different communities of the State in general and those of the Kashmiri Muslims in particular. In response to the report submitted by the Commission, the Maharaja by and large accepted all the recommendations made in favour of the Muslims.[22] However, many of these recommendations remained simply as paper-edicts or were not properly implemented. Thus, for a long time the focus of the demands of the Muslim Conference was to press for the proper implementation of these recommendations.

The Glancy Commission had recommended several measures for the educational advancement of the Muslims. But as per the statements of the Muslim Conference these recommendations were not properly implemented. For instance, the Commission had recommended the appointment of a Muslim Inspector to look after the education of the Muslim community. But he was not vested with the powers recommended by the Commission. The Commission had clearly recommended that the concerned official would see whether the educational policies of the State were practically implemented. But according to the leadership:[23]

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21 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol,I, pp.288-289; Shabnam Qayum, *Kashmir Ka Siyasi Inqilab*, vol.I, p.185.

22 For details about the orders pertaining to the acceptance of Glancy Commission recommendations by the Maharja see Mirza Shafiq Hussain, *Dastawaizāt*, pp.169-187. It is pertinent to mention here that in reaction to the Glancy Commission recommendations Kashmiri Pandits had started an agitation in Srinagar called Roti Agitation. Since the Commission had confirmed the Muslim plight to a great extent and had therefore, recommended certain measures to improve the lot of the Muslim masses. This measure of the Government had evoked a stiff resentment from the Kashmir Pandits.

23 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the First Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 17, 1932 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.227.

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> The powers of the Inspector were curtailed to the extent that it remained simply a nominal position. At the time when the Commission was preparing its report the number of Hindu Headmasters in the State schools was 15 out of 16. And presently it is 16 out of 16.

The Muslim Conference fully realized the importance of education and worked for its dissemination among the people of the State in general and those of the Muslims in particular. The Conference had also realized the significance of the female education and therefore, attached considerable importance to it. It is evident from the presidential address delivered in the first annual session of the Conference:[24]

> During this period let us strengthen press and encourage Muslims towards education so that the number of conscious workers would increase day by day. Islam and ignorance is a divergent phenomenon. In past Muslims have illuminated the world with the light of knowledge. All the nations of the world are highly indebted to those Muslims. But alas! Today the Muslims have themselves fallen in the abyss of ignorance. We should pay due attention to the female education. It is said that women had played a great role in the transformation of different societies and have changed the destinies of nations and empires.

The leaders were very much particular about the educational development of the State. Not surprisingly, therefore, the demand of educational reform became the refrain of demands made by the leadership. In his welcome address to the third annual session held at Sopore, Khawaja Maqbool demanded the promotion of Middle schools of Bandipora and Handwara to High schools on the plea that except for towns there were no High schools in Kamraz (north Kashmir) area where lakhs of people lived. He also demanded that one intermediate college be opened at Baramullah as the students of Muzaffarabad, Baramullah and Sopore had to go to Srinagar for higher education, causing a stumbling block in the growth of higher education. He also urged for opening Middle schools in the parganahs of Hamal (Rafiabad), Zainageer, Lolab, Trehgam, Marwar and Titwal. The Conference was fully conscious about the importance of agricultural sector in the crippled economy of the State. Therefore, introduction of

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24 Ibid; p.229.

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the subjects on agriculture and the opening of agricultural schools was emphasized upon.[25]

The leaders often reminded the Government about the backwardness of the State in modern education. In their efforts to persuade the authorities for the rapid dissemination of education they substantiated their argument by making a comparative analysis between the State of Jammu and Kashmir and the British India particularly the neighbouring province of Punjab, where the Government had taken considerable measures for the spread of education. Expressing grave concern over the educational backwardness of the State in general and those of the Muslims in particular because of the lukewarm attitude of the Government, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas complained:[26]

> In the field of education our State is most backward in the whole of India and those who can merely read and write are just four per cent of the total population. Inspite of such educational backwardness the Government spends very less on this sector as compared to Punjab. It spends only five per cent whereas the Punjab Government spends fourteen per cent of its total revenues on education. Moreover, the educational funds are spent in such a way that Muslims are least benefited. The scarcity of schools in Muslim populated areas, the absence of Muslim teachers in educational institutions and lack of financial support to Muslim educational institutions are the basic factors for the slow rate of educational development of the State. The scholarships for Muslim students have been decreased instead of being increased. The Hanfia School, Anantnag, could not receive building grant so far and other Muslim educational institutions are facing severe financial crisis. So long as the education does not get popularised among the Muslims our political and economic problems will remain unsolved.

The Conference stressed upon the Government to realize its responsibility of promoting education among its subjects. The leaders publically declared that the dissemination of education was the duty of the State. Their statements about the indifferent attitude of the Government towards education were sufficiently substantiated by facts

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25 Welcome address delivered by Khawaja Muhammad Maqbool to the Third Annual Session of Muslim Conference on November 11, 1934 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.324.

26 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.391-392.

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and figures. For instance in his address to fifth annual session of the Conference the President said:[27]

> The problem of educational backwardness is the most crucial problem of the nation. The progress of nations and individuals is subservient to education. In present times the spread of education is not the responsibility of the people but, as observed in the recent past, it has been the duty of the Government. But the Government of Kashmir has become notorious in view of its apathetic attitude towards the education of Muslim masses .For the last twenty-five years there has been greater realization among the Muslims in favour of modern education. However, there are many impediments but the Government has never taken any step to remove them. After spending a substantial amount the Government invited the Education Commissioner of India Mr. Sharp in 1916 to suggest ways and means to popularize education. One of his suggestions was that each village with a population of 500 or more, should have a Primary school. At that time there were 1400 such villages. Today because of increase in population the number of such villages has reached to 2500. But during the long period of twenty two years (1916-1937) the Government has not even opened 1400 schools. Though according to Sharp Commission Report there should have been a Primary school within ten years in each village with 500 population.

The Muslims had complained before Glancy Commission the indifferent attitude of the Government towards popularizing education among the Muslims. The Commission had endorsed the complaint of the Muslims and forcefully recommended the fulfilment of Sharp Commission recommendations. It also recommended that in order to attract the Muslims to modern schools Arabic knowing teachers should be appointed.[28] But the Government did not take any cognizance in this direction.

Like the Indian nationalists, the leaders of the Conference had strong reservations against the curriculum introduced by the State in its schools. They based their argument on the fact that the Government had imitated the curriculum of the schools from outside and the same as such could not be applied to the schools of Jammu and Kashmir State because of its distinct environment and needs. Therefore, they demanded the change of syllabi in

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27 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Fifth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on May 15, 1937 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.430-431.

28 See Glancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.100.

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the schools to make it responsive to the needs of the time. They also exhorted to make agricultural education compulsory in village schools.[29] Among other demands of the Conference include an increase in the number of schools, enhancement of the pay of teachers and introduction of movable library system so that the educated people of the villages[30] would have access to further education. It also expressed concern over the scarcity of Middle and High schools as one had to travel long distances even for availing of education up to middle standard. About the poor standard of Primary education and the insufficient number of Middle and High schools, the President of the fifth annual session observed:[31]

> The drawbacks of primary education in the State indicate that the condition of Middle and High schools, too, would not be upto the mark. First of all, their number is not satisfactory. In some large areas of the Valley there exist no schools to cater the post primary educational needs of the people. High schools are confined only to a few major towns. The total number of the Government and semi-Government High schools in the State of Jammu and Kashmir is not more than twenty-two which is equivalent to the number of such schools in one district of Punjab.

The leadership did not struggle for the improvement of the school education alone. It was very much particular about the dissemination and welfare of higher education as well. It did not only demand an increase in the facilities of college education but the need of opening a university in Kashmir was also emphasized upon as the students had to go to Punjab and other universities of India for higher education.[32] While expressing his concern over the inadequate facilities of college education the President of the fifth annual session remarked:[33]

> For higher education there are only two colleges in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir State, though there is an urgent need to have one college at each district headquarter. It is strange that in such a densely populated city like Srinagar there is only one college which has not only to cater the needs of Srinagar city but also of all the districts of Kashmir and those of Ladakh, Gilgit, Muzaffarabad and

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29 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Fifth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on May 15, 1937 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.431-432.

30 Ibid., 432.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., p.433.

33 Ibid., p.432.

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> Poonch. Moreover, the same college is meant for both men as well as women.

As already pointed out, the leadership had fully realized the significance of female education and was, therefore, very much particular about its popularization. In addition to mobilizing masses in favour of female education the Conference also highlighted the apathy of the State towards its development:[34]

> For women education there should be two separate colleges both in Srinagar as well as in Jammu. Co-educational colleges are not suitable for Kashmir. The people of Kashmir are not yet ready to accept it. They prefer ignorance to co-education. About female education it is pertinent to mention that there are only three girls High schools in the whole State, which is a clear proof about the non-chalant attitude of the Government.

Like the Indian nationalists the leaders of the Conference appreciated the importance of technical education. In order to infuse life and blood into the dead bones of the fragile economy of the State the leaders wanted the Government to encourage the technical education. While highlighting the importance of technical education the President of the fifth annual session demanded:[35]

> Dissemination of education in the State deserves more attention. The present economic condition of the State demands that technical education facilities in agriculture and handicrafts should be provided to men as well as women. The purpose of education should not be confined to producing educated unemployed youth and clerks alone.

From the very inception, Muslim Conference leadership was fully conscious about achieving and safeguarding the civil rights and liberties. In his welcome address to the first annual session of Muslim Conference held at Sopore, Khawaja Maqbool demanded the restoration of all such religious places, which were still under the custody of the State:[36]

> Though in response to Glancy Commission recommendations the Government has ordered restoration of all the religious places of Muslims, the order is not being properly implemented.

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34 Ibid; p.433.

35 Ibid.

36 Welcome address delivered by Khawaja Muhammad Maqbool to the Third Annual Session of Muslim Conference on November 11, 1934 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.324.

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Likewise the President of the fourth annual session demanded that the convert Muslims should not be deprived of their ancestral property. It was considered as interference in the freedom of religion particularly in the case of Muslims:[37]

> We are deeply hurt that we have not still achieved freedom of religion. According to the prevailing law of inheritance every neo-Muslim can be deprived of his ancestral property. We have to be ready to pay every possible sacrifice to do away with this discrimination.

It was because of the struggle of the Muslim Conference that the Government ultimately conceded the demand of the right to form political associations and the freedom of press and platform. While highlighting the achievements of Muslim Conference, the President of the second annual session specially mentioned the success it achieved in the process of democratizing the nature of the otherwise autocratic Dogra rule:[38]

> The State could no longer deny the natural right of the people and the time came when the Government ultimately conceded the demand of its subjects with regard to the freedom of press and platform. No doubt, there is still some restriction on the press under the Press Regulation, which in the advanced countries is termed as Press Ordinance. But our Conference will continue its efforts in this direction and in near future it will succeed. In addition to the freedom of press and platform, the right of forming associations and societies achieved by the Conference was equally important. Prior to this, formation of an association was considered a crime and it was equally forbidden to Hindus and Muslims. Even religious associations had to function under strict watch and vigilance and had to take every step very carefully. It was due to the constant efforts of the Muslim Conference that today you have the full right of forming associations.

It was because of the role of Muslim Conference that in 1933 the peasants got proprietary rights in land (*khalsa* lands alone), some privileges related to forests, exemption from tax on milch cow,

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37 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.392-393.

38 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.293-294.

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kahcharai (grazing tax) and *nazrana*. Not only this but the Conference succeeded in persuading the Government to accept the demand of paying land revenue of *nautaud* (fresh broken land) in instalments. Besides, the confiscated religious places were also restored to the Muslims though the demand that the converts to Islam should not be debarred from inheriting ancestral property was not acceeded to.[39]

A very significant preoccupation of the Muslim Conference, which appears novel in its own right, was its emphasis on what may be called character building of its adherents. It regarded character building not only as a pre-requisite for preparing the nation for fighting out injustice but also for building a just society. For this it regarded religious education and observance of religious injunctions as well as the spread of modern education essential. It believed that religious education would cultivate among people honesty and parsimonity besides stopping them from performing useless ceremonies, waywardness and feeling pleasure in dragging each other to courts. Detailing the social reconstruction programme, the President of the third annual session observed:[40]

> One of the fundamental objectives of the Muslim Conference is to struggle for social and cultural welfare of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir. Until a nation is culturally developed it is wrong to count it among the civilized nations of the world. If we Muslims would follow the teachings of Islam, study the holy Quran daily, offer prayers collectively in mohallas and villages, stand united, impart modern as well as religious education to our children, abstain from adultery and root out this social evil, realize the importance of cleanliness, give up extravagance, stop performing unnecessary ceremonies and avoid litigations, certainly the purpose of our objective can be achieved.

Like other parts of the Indian Subcontinent recurrent famines and epidemics claiming heavy toll of life, was a commonplace phenomenon of the period under reference.[41] However, while in case of British India, with

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39 Ibid., p.298.

40 Presidential address delivered by Main Ahmed Yar Khan to the Third Annual Session of Muslim Conference on November 13, 1934 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.344.

41 Ernest Neve, *Beyond the Pir Panjal*, pp.272-273; For the ravages of cholera and epidemics see also Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp.218-219.

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the passage of time, the Government took up various measures to improve the health services, the Dogra rulers not only showed apathy towards providing basic medical facilities to the people, but also remained averse to the British medical missionaries. After introducing certain medical facilities by the end of the nineteenth century, the State alloted a meagre budget to the health services. The Muslim Conference also fought for providing medical facilities to the people and in this context it invited the attention of the Government through memorandums, and the resolutions passed at the end of its annual sessions. To quote the following words of the presidential address of the fifth annual session of the Conference:[42]

> It is the duty of the State to take care of the health needs of its subjects. But in this regard the Government does not fulfil its duties. There is a need to construct hospital buildings and equip them with medical facilities. But the State spends so parsimoniously on medicines that each individual of the State can get even less than three paise out of the annual budget allocated for the purchase of medicines. The deplorable condition of hospitals can be gauged by the fact that even the main hospital of the State Sadar Hospital, Srinagar is situated in a dingy building. There is extreme scarcity of space and hundreds of patients are unattended for want of space. Thus, it is easy to guess the deplorable condition of the hospitals of the far off towns and there exists no medicine. The maximum localities are even deprived of hospital facilities. The poor peasants die for want of medicine worth five paise. It is necessary that a portion of Government treasury, which is filled by the masses with the sweat of their brow, should be spent on their health and they must be saved from untimely deaths.

To conclude, the programme and activities of the Muslim Conference were all-encompassing. The Conference not only struggled for moulding the autocratic and feudal nature of the *Raj*, but it also persuaded the people in favour of modern education, defended their interests against corrupt officials and money lenders, educated them about the need to purge the society of the social evils, dissuaded them from taking debts and making wasteful expenditures.

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42 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Fifth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on May 15, 1937 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.433-434.

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d. Programme of Constitutional Reforms

Constitutional reforms formed an integral part of the programme and activities of the Muslim Conference. It was from the very beginning that the Conference took up the demand of constitutional reforms on priority. In response to Glancy Commission recommendations the Government had appointed a Franchise Committee under the Chairmanship of the Chief Justice of the State Sir Barjour Dalal on 31 May 1932.[43] In its first annual session the President of the Conference complained of the non-fulfilment of the promises by the Government, which the latter had made by order in response to the Glancy Commission recommendations. The Conference demanded immediate establishment of the Constituent Assembly and an increase in the powers of the proposed Assembly. It also demanded the extension of the Municipal Committee and the proposed district boards.[44]

In its second annual session Muslim Conference again demanded the establishment of the Legislative Assembly following the failure of the Government to fulfil its promise that a declaration to this effect will be made by the end of 1933. It also expressed its displeasure over the concealment of the Franchise Committee Report. The Conference demanded that the recommendations of the Committee should be made public immediately in order to provide the people an opportunity to point out its drawbacks as was done in case of British India. The Conference had unofficially learnt about some grave lacunae in the recommendations under reference, and the President referred to them in his address for their correction. For example, in cities right to vote was given to property holders worth Rs.600, whereas in case of villages the property qualification was many times greater. Here right to vote was given to those peasants who paid Rs.20 as *malia* (land revenue). By giving right to vote to such peasants who paid Rs.20 as *malia* only property holders worth Rs.10,000 were given right to vote in villages. Moreover, their moveable and other immoveable property was not taken into account. The President demanded that before publishing the voter list the Franchise Committee should reconsider its

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43 *Ranbir*, Jammu, June 5, 1932.

44 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the First Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 17, 1932 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.225-226.

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recommendations regarding the right to vote, so that thirty four lakh population living in the villages was not deprived of this right.[45]

The Conference expressed its dissatisfaction over the recommendations of the Glancy Commission regarding district boards. It particularly condemned the inclusion of Zaildars (officials incharge of land revenue attestation) in the district bodies. It was rightly feared that they would act as mouthpieces of the Government and thus sabotage the basic purpose of these bodies. The Conference demanded the establishment of district boards on Punjab pattern so that ninety six per cent village population would be benefited.[46]

The leadership was also disgusted with the constitution of the Municipal Committee. It is worthwhile to mention that there was only one Municipal Committee in the whole Valley i.e. 'the Municipal Committee of Srinagar'. Besides its President more than half of its members were nominated. The election by ward system was unprincipled as according to this system an area with one and a half lakh Muslim population was divided into three wards, whereas the areas having predominant non-Muslim population were divided into five wards though their total population did not exceed a few thousands. The irony of the fact is that when the Muslims raised a voice against it the Government instead of redressing the genuine grievance gave up the election and filled up the seats through nomination. Similar concern was also expressed against the constitution of notified area committees.[47]

The Muslim Conference rejected the Franchise Committee Report which was published in January 1934. It was rejected through a written statement issued by the President of Muslim Conference on 29 January 1934. The report was rejected on the following grounds:[48]

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45 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.295-296.

46 Ibid., p.297.

47 Ibid., pp.297-298.

48 Statement issued to the press by Muslim Conference through its President, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, in reaction to the Franchise Committee Report vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.313-314.

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1. Out of 75 members of the proposed Assembly 42 were to be nominated. So according to the Conference it was nothing but a mockery.
2. Out of 75 members, 34 would be Muslims whereas the number of the non-Muslim members would be 41. In this way 80 per cent Muslim population has been converted into a minority. There seems no scope for the evolution of a constitution. Judicial Minister would be the permanent President of the Assembly so there is no scope for electing the President.
3. The majority of the members would be the title awardees, officers of the towns, Government pension recipients, *jagirdars, ilaqadars* etc. So they would always be under the influence of the Government and ignorant about the problems of the common masses.
4. The *Hanjis* (boatmen) were not included in the voter list. Muslim *Bakarwals* (nomadic people) were also deprived of the right to vote, whereas Hindu *Bakarwals* fully enjoyed this right. The Conference believes that the Assembly would be nothing but a mere show.

Desirous to see the State legislature as a truly responsible institution the Conference pleaded for introducing various reforms:[49]

> The Assembly should have the right over all the items of the budget, except foreign affairs and personal expenditure of the Maharaja. Such items over which opinion of expression is forbidden should always be placed on the floor of the Assembly for discussion. The Assembly should pass all laws and regulations. Ministers should be responsible to the Assembly and the elected members of the Assembly should elect at least two ministers. Such a minister against whom Assembly would pass vote of no confidence should be treated as being expelled from the cabinet. The Maharaja would be within his rights to reject any decision taken by the Assembly. But if the Assembly would pass any bill in two successive sessions the Maharaja would kindly accept it. The permanent tillers have been given right to vote but it is not clear whether they have been included in the voter list. The labourers have not been given proper representation.

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49 Ibid., p.315.

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Though the Conference was not satisfied with the constitution and powers of the Assembly, it decided to contest the elections in order to disprove the propaganda of the communalists and reactionaries from within and outside the State that the Muslim Conference leadership belonged to a particular interest group and did not represent the Muslim masses.[50] Polling took place on 4 September 1934 and the Muslim Conference won all the twenty-one seats reserved for the Muslims. Sixteen out of twenty-one members of the Conference were elected unopposed. In Srinagar the Muslims had five seats and there was a contest between the Muslim Conference and Azad Muslim Conference. The Muslim Conference captured all the five seats, which gave a shattering blow to the prestige of Mirwaiz Muhammad Yusuf Shah.[51]

The first session of the Assembly was held on 17 October 1934 at Shergarhi in Srinagar. The Maharaja attended the inaugural session and the Prime Minister read out a proclamation related to the powers of the *Praja Sabha* (Legislative Assembly), which had already been published. It was evident from the proclamation that *Praja Sabha* was a powerless forum. No doubt the elected as well as the nominated members could ask questions, move resolutions and discuss the budget. But, all important powers of the Government were reserved for the Maharaja.[52] In fact the Executive was responsible to him and not to the Assembly. The constitution and powers of the Assembly could satisfy none.

At a meeting of the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference, which was also attended by the newly elected members, Mian Ahmad Yar was elected as the leader of the Muslim Conference for legislature.[53] It goes to the credit of the Kashmiri speaking members that although in majority in the parliamentary party, they elected a Punjabi speaking colleague as their leader. It was in keeping with the Muslim awakening, which aimed at breaking linguistic and regional barriers. While addressing the first session of Assembly held on 17 October 1934, Mian Ahmad Yar expressed dissatisfaction of his party over the Franchise Committee Report as well as the limited powers of the legislature. He said that the people of the State deserved better

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50 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.321.

51 Ibid., p.323.

52 *JKA*, Praja Sabha Deliberations, October-November, 1934.

53 *Martand*, Srinagar, October 10, 1934.

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treatment. On the other hand, the non-Muslim members, except Sardar Budh Singh and Jagat Ram, a Harijan member who boycotted the inaugural session, showered lavish praise on what they termed as the "magnanimity" of Maharaja Hari Singh in setting up the Assembly.[54] The session lasted till 2 November 1934.

In its third annual session held at Sopore on 11,12 and 13 November 1934, under the Presidentship of Mian Ahmad Yar, the Conference adopted resolutions demanding a wider Franchise and larger powers for the Assembly. It also voiced its concern over the unnecessary delay in the establishment of the district boards. The Conference demanded the election of the municipal committees (Municipal Committee of Srinagar and that of Jammu) on the basis of local self Government. Besides, the representation of various communities in these committees as per their population strength was also emphasized upon.[55]

In his presidential address to the fourth annual session, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas expressed his dissatisfaction over irresponsible character of the Legislative Assembly, working and constitution of municipal committees and the non-establishment of the district boards. He was critical to the appointment of Government officers as the Presidents of the municipalities who were not responsible to the people. Besides, the criterion for right to vote for municipalities was more restricted as compared to Assembly. The President rightly felt that in case of municipalities every adult person should have been given the right to vote so that the masses would learn how to exercise their opinion and would cultivate among them the sense of responsibility. But here the situation was different. In case of Assembly the minimum qualification required for right to vote had been declared as middle pass, whereas in case of municipal elections it was raised to graduation. The property and income qualifications had also been declared necessary and most of the officers, who were graduates but not property holders, were deprived of right to vote. He also criticized the

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54 *JKA*, Praja Sabha Deliberations, October-November, 1934.

55 Presidential address delivered by Main Ahmad Yar Khan to the Third Annual Session of Muslim Conference on November 13, 1934 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.339-340.

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existing system of the constituencies, which had reduced the majority to a minority.[56]

The Third Round Table Conference had met in London in November 1932, and the Indian National Congress had not participated in it. It eventually led to the passing of the Government of India Act 1935. The Act provided for the establishment of an All India Federation and a new system of Government for the provinces on the basis of provincial autonomy. The Federation was to be based on a union of the provinces and the Princely States. There was to be a bicameral federal legislature in which the States were given disproportionate weightage. The representatives of the States were not to be elected by the people, but nominated by the rulers. However, the federal part of the Act was never introduced but the provincial part was soon put into practice.[57] The Muslim Conference was not in favour of the Maharaja joining the Federation. It argued that if the Maharaja contrary to the whishes of the Conference seeks to join the proposed Federation, he should sent elected representatives to represent the State. The Indian National Congress had also condemned the Act as "totally disappointing". In addition to its undemocratic nature another probable reason for preventing the Maharaja from joining the Federation was the attempt of the Kashmiri leadership to frustrate the expected British cooperation that the Maharaja would receive in suppressing the freedom movement of Kashmir.[58]

The demand for a responsible Government became the watchword of the Muslim Conference particularly from January 1934, when the Youngmen's Muslim Association, the youth wing of the Conference, started a vigorous agitation against the non-implementation of the Glancy Commission recommendations.[59] The most part of the presidential address of the sixth annual session (1938) was devoted to this demand. The demand obviously received impetus after the passage

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56 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas Khan to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.387-388.

57 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, pp.337-338.

58 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Fifth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on May 15, 1937 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.429-430.

59 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurrivat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, pp.300-302.

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of the Act of 1935, which granted internal autonomy to the British Indian provinces about which the President also made a fleeting reference. By responsible Government the leadership meant transfer of power to the elected members of legislature. In his presidential address to the sixth annual session of Muslim Conference, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah demanded:[60]

> We should be given autonomy in managing the affairs of our own homeland and there should not be any external interference. In other words, it is a demand for responsible Government and this is the goal of our movement for which we have sacrificed our lives.

The President did not restrict his demand to the establishment of a responsible Government alone. But he also criticized the top State apparatus, which was dominated by the outsiders who were ignorant about the problems faced by the local people.[61]

On 8 May 1936, the Conference observed a Responsible Government Day. On this day public meetings were held and processions taken out by the masses. Resolutions condemning the State Assembly as an inadequate and unrepresentative body were passed. A demand was made for setting up of a powerful Assembly. The second anniversary of the Responsible Government Day was observed on 5 August 1938. Public meetings were organised all over the State. The main slogan shouted everywhere was the establishment of the *Azad* (independent) Assembly.[62]

e. Economic Programme

Economic emancipation of the masses formed the fundamental feature of the programme of the Muslim Conference. The first annual session of the Conference outlined the economic scenario of the State. It pointed out the non-fulfilment of the promises made by the Government namely the grant of proprietary rights in land, reduction of the magnitude of *malia* and providing adequate representation to Muslims in Government services, which it had made through an order in response to Glancy Commission

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60 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.447.

61 Ibid., p.448.

62 Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p.191.

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recommendations.[63] A major portion of the presidential address delivered in the second annual session of the Conference was devoted to the cause of the peasant community. While expressing his satisfaction over the grant of proprietary rights to the peasants and the abolition of *nazrana*, the President also pleaded for the grant of proprietary rights over *khalsa-i-sarkar*.[64] He also demanded increase in the area of *shamilat-i-deh* (area of land over which villagers collectively possessed the right to use for common purposes like graveyard or grazing ground). It was demanded that *chakdars* and *jagirdars* should not have right over *shamilat-i-deh* as many peasants were evicted from *nautaud* (fresh broken land) by the former on the ground that it was *nautaud-i-najaiz* (illegal fresh broken land). In this connection the Conference submitted a detailed note to the Government.[65]

The Conference brought to the notice of the Government that *jagirdars* had no right to collect land revenue in terms of kind. It also demanded that the Dharmarth Department should also be stopped from collecting land revenue in kind. The leaders gave high priority to improving the lot of the peasantry, which was suffering because of the high pitch of land revenue demand and defective method of the land revenue assessment. They urged the Government to change its land revenue policy, arguing:[66]

> It was accepted by the Glancy Commission that the method of land revenue assessment should be according to the Land Revenue Amendment Act of Punjab (1928) and also according to the one that prevailed in the Sarhad Province. But no action has been taken on it so far. In Kashmir land revenue was fixed at 1/3 of the total produce because at the time of previous settlement (1890) the relationship between the peasant and the State was that of a tiller and the proprietor. But from 1933 the relationship changed to that of a proprietor and the Government. So the previous assessment cannot continue at any cost. Besides, in the previous assessment one anna per rupee was charged as *malikana* (charges against

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63 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the First Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 16, 1932 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.225.

64 The waste and old fallow lands were entered as *khalsa-i-sarkar* during the land settlement of 1890; For details see Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.426.

65 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.300-301.

66 Ibid., pp.301-302.

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proprietorship). In the new circumstances when *malikana* rights have been transferred to the peasants it stands remitted.

Lending of money on high interest had caused severe problems to the peasantry. The peasants were born in debt, lived in debt and died in debt. In fact it was one of the main causes of their ruination. For paying land revenue in cash they had to part a big portion of their produce with the *waddar* (moneylender). The *waddars* were often exploiting the ignorance and poverty of the hapless peasantry. The Conference, therefore, demanded that the system of money-lending be regulated in Kashmir in order to prevent *waddars* from charging arbitrary interest rates.[67]

As apprehended by Walter Lawrence, the Muslim Conference was also apprehensive of transfer of land from peasants to rich people since the poverty stricken peasantry always found itself under pressure to sell its property to meet its bare necessities. Therefore, the Muslim Conference urged the Government to adopt Land Transfer Regulation on the pattern of Punjab, so that the land did not transfer from peasant to non-peasant.[68]

The Conference expressed its unhappiness over the non-chalant attitude of the Government towards the agricultural development of Kashmir. In this context it compared Kashmir with Punjab and complained that unlike the Government of Punjab, the Kashmir Government did not take any step to provide the peasants, high yielding seeds and the superior quality cattle breed. The Conference also demanded that necessary steps be taken for imparting the education of agricultural sciences:[69]

> For agricultural education the Government of Kashmir has not established even a single school though in the neighbouring State of Punjab Agriculture is taught like other subjects in all public Middle and High schools. Government farms are attached to the schools where students are practically taught agricultural work. Moreover, the Punjab Government has established a splendid college for higher education in agricultural sciences. On the other hand the Government of Kashmir has ignored the subject. The Department of Agriculture has not done any worth mentioning job except getting the salaries punctually. In an agricultural country like Jammu and Kashmir it is necessary that if the Government spends rupees

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67 Ibid., p.302.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

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> eighteen lakh on education to produce unemployed youth and clerks, it should spend half or at least ¼ of it on agricultural education. If at the moment there is no possibility of establishing a permanent school, even then, in place of less important subjects, a subject on agriculture should be made compulsory in all schools.

The Muslim Conference leadership fully realized the importance of peasant class for the overall development of a country. It was conscious that the prosperity of a country lies in the prosperity of peasantry. Small wonder then, the leaders gave priority to peasant demands particularly the reduction of land revenue and exemption from debts:[70]

> It is the community, which by dint of its sheer hard work provides food to the people and fill up the treasures of the State. It is these workers who in spite of the harassment by the officials provide a variety of dishes for them. It is they who maintain the luxuries and resources of the rich. But in spite of all this, the Government has no interest in redressing their genuine grievances, to free them from heavy taxation and debts, and to provide them minimum necessities of survival. The Government should try its best to protect them against the landlords who harass them like ferocious wolves.

In 1935, the Conference moved a resolution in the Assembly demanding reduction of land revenue and amendment of Land Transfer Regulation. But the ministers opposed it.[71] Yet it repeatedly lashed out at the retrograde agrarian policy of the State. According to leadership the regressive nature of land revenue demand, faulty system of assessment, State policy of recovering land revenue arrears, inhuman exactions by the privileged land holders and the lack of interest of the State was destroying the agricultural sector. It is remarkable to see the Muslim Conference leadership conscious of regressive taxation and its implications:[72]

> Land revenue is the most important source of income of the State. The biggest segment of the population relies upon agriculture, and directly and indirectly ninety per cent population of the State live on

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70 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.385-386.

71 Ibid., p.386.

72 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.461-462.

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it. So the State can be prosperous only when the economic problems of the agricultural population are properly solved. If the Government had taken a slight interest towards improving the condition of peasantry, I am sure that today there would not have been lakhs of hungry and thousands of naked people before our eyes.

The high pitch of land revenue demand has destroyed the poor peasants. The main objection against the land revenue assessment has been that this tax is imposed totally against the very principles of assessment. Land revenue has been imposed upon small landholders to the extent that a peasant who has just one or two kanals of land yielding a small produce has not been exempted from this tax. The result is that a poor man whose land does not produce enough even to fulfil his bare necessities has to pay land revenue. And those big *jagirdars* and *chakdars* who possess thousands of kanals of land also have to meet this demand uniformally. Such a uniform method of land revenue assessment puts the poor peasant in great trouble. Basically the land revenue should have been imposed on category basis so that the small and big landholders would contribute according to their economic status. The poor peasant pays the land revenue at the cost of his two time meals. Thus, it is obligatory on the State that land revenue should be imposed on the basis of the economic stratification.

The leaders frequently referred to the vast disparity that existed between the magnitude of land revenue demand of Punjab and that of Kashmir. A peasant of Jammu with eighty to eighty-five *bighas* of land had to pay Rs.51 as revenue, whereas the same peasant with same area of land within the boarders of Punjab was paying only Rs.10 and 8 annas. The conditions were further worst in Kashmir where the land revenue was heavier as compared to Jammu.[73] Besides, the Punjab Government was taking care of the irrigation and other facilities of the peasantry, whereas the Kashmir Government was apathetic to such developmental activities.[74] The Conference took up other issues of the peasantry such as construction of canals and providing veterinary and cooperative facilities. More emphasis was laid on the indifferent attitude of the State towards providing medical facilities to the villagers:[75]

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73 Ibid., p.463.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., p.464.

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> In the context of the welfare of the villages one important requisite is the protection of the increasingly falling health of the villagers towards which no attention is being paid. The Government has opened a Health Department and nine to ten lakh rupees are spent annually on this department. Out of this budget a very small amount is being spent on the health care of villages. Even thousands of villagers die for want of medicine worth not more than a few paise. The condition of village women is more deplorable. At the time of delivery they do not have even those facilities available which are available to an animal in the cities. Besides, the villagers suffer more for want of good consultations than the want of medicine.

The Conference demanded that the peasants need education about modern techniques of agriculture, the importance of fertilizers *(khad)* and preventive measures to save crops against various diseases. It was felt that for this purpose there was a need for large-scale information dissemination,[76] because the peasants continued their traditional methods and were reluctant to adopt new techniques mainly because of their ignorance.

Needless to say corruption was rampant in every branch of the administration. The leadership voiced against this social evil and stressed that the defaulters should be severely dealt with:[77]

> Widespread corruption is the blackest stain on the face of State administration. For the last three years corruption has increased unprecedently and every department has been badly affected by it. In this context Police, Public Works Department, Custom and Forest Department are becoming particularly notorious. We request the Maharaja that unless he takes stringent measures to stop corruption there is no hope for any betterment in the given conditions. It is a matter on which the Government should not take any lenient view and leave it simply to the ministry for enquiry and action. But it is necessary that the Government may appoint a commission to nip the evil in the bud. The commission should consist of both official as well as non-official members.

Next to peasantry the biggest section of the population of the State comprised of labourers. There were a few factories in Srinagar namely Carpet Weaving Factory, Match Factory and Silk Factory, which engaged thousands

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76 Ibid.

77 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.393.

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of labourers. There was another category of labourers who were employed by the Public Works Department for the construction of roads and buildings. The Conference represented the grievances of these labourers as well. For instance, the Government used to disengage the labourers of Silk Factory for two to three months a year, which caused severe problems to them. The Conference urged the Government to run its factories round the year or give some allowances to the artisans during the vacation period. The labourers of Public Works Department complained that the higher authorities of the department resorted to nepotism and alloted contracts to their own kith and kin. Such contractors often engaged carpenters, masons and even labourers from outside the State, which told badly upon the lot of Kashmiri labourers. The leadership called upon the labourers to unite and join the Muslim Conference so that their interests would be safeguarded.[78] It expressed pleasure over the formation of associations by the motor drivers and the boatmen of Srinagar who also lent their support to the Conference. The formation of similar associations by other professionals was also emphasised upon.[79]

The Conference voiced its concern over the apathetic attitude of the Government towards the deplorable condition of artisans and craftsmen. It expressed its dissatisfaction over the functioning of Industries Department, which according to it did nothing to guide and help the local artisans. It was also not happy with the undue help, which the Government was extending to non-locals or the kith and kin of bureaucrats for establishing industries in the State.[80]

The Conference encouraged the artisans and persuaded them not to give up their professions under the prevailing economic crisis and stressed that they should instead devote more attention towards their arts and assured them that the Conference would take every step to give widespread publicity to the Kashmiri arts. The Conference was confident about the economic potentialities of the State and believed that if the Government would pay only a part of attention that other Governments pay towards different economic sectors, the economy of the State would reach the highest pinnacle of prosperity.[81]

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78 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.303-304.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid., p.305.

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The leadership vehemently criticized the industrial policy of the State as, according to it, the State was bestowed with rich natural resources but the Government was not doing anything to exploit them. It was demanded that the Government should seek the expertise of those companies who were specialized in exploiting the mineral resources. The leaders rightly felt that by exploiting the natural deposits the State would not only help the unemployed labourers but would also enhance its revenues. It would not be out of place to quote the following extract of the presidential address delivered to the fourth annual session of the Conference:[82]

> Jammu and Kashmir is the richest State in minerals. There are various petrol reserves, copper deposits and coal mines which are unexploited. If the Government is not in a position to exploit them it is better to give them on contract to some rich companies on reasonable terms. The income from this sector will prove helpful to the State in framing its budget and will also ensure the socio-economic welfare of the masses. Besides, it will help in solving the crucial problem of unemployment of the labourers who go out of the State in search of livelihood.

The importation of machine-made goods in the Valley had adversely affected the handicrafts of Kashmir and a large number of artisans were thrown out of employment. The leadership demanded that in order to overcome this problem the Government should open model factories to educate the local artisans about the European technology so that they would be able to compete with the machine-made goods. To protect the local arts from total decline it also demanded financial assistance for the artisans and reduction of custom duties. The leaders expressed their resentment over the undue concessions that the Government provided to outsider *karkhandars* (industrialists) who according to them were imposed upon the Kashmiri arts. They rightly felt that there was an urgent need to start a campaign for popularizing Kashmiri crafts in Indian and foreign *mundies* (markets) for which a semi-government industrial board should be instituted.[83] The fifth annual session also took up the cause of the declining Kashmiri crafts, which were at the verge of extinction because of industrial revolution. It was complained that the Government was doing

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82 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.389-390.

83 Ibid.

Kashmir Treasure Collection.Digitization by eGangotri

nothing to save these crafts.[84] In its sixth annual session the Conference again invited the attention of the Government towards the pathetic condition of labourers and artisans. While appreciating increase in the wages of the labourers of Silk Factory, Srinagar in 1937, the Conference demanded the fulfilment of their other demands like fixation of the duration of a week and remuneration for amputation or injury of any organ of the body.[85]

The leadership believed that the migration of Kashmiri labourers to different regions of India was the result of the callous attitude of the Government towards this sizeable section of the society:[86]

> After agriculture a large portion of the population of State depends for its livelihood on daily-wages. In the absence of avenues within the State together with irresponsible role of the Government these people are earning their livelihood by carrying heavy loads on their backs in British India. No civilized Government of the world will tolerate such an insult and humiliation of its subjects. The Government of Kashmir has no concern for their plight. Devoid of self-reliance it is averse to the creation of the avenues of livelihood for these people within the State.

In order to mobilize the working class to fight for the amelioration of their conditions, the Conference organized working class unions. The leaders who played a prominent role in this venture were Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq and Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Qara. A labour union known as Mazdoor Union was formed and Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq was elected as its President. The Union staged huge demonstrations one after the other in Srinagar as well as in Jammu.[87] The Conference often voiced for the emancipation of both the artisans as well as labourers, echoes of which were heard in *Praja Sabha* also.[88]

The Muslim Conference did not lose sight of the problems of the Muslim trading class. According to the leadership, the Government did

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84 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Fifth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on May 15, 1937 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.434.

85 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.465.

86 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.388-389.

87 *Hamdard*, Srinagar, October 9, 1937.

88 *Ranbir*, Jammu, November 15, 1937.

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not take any practical measures towards the encouragement of Muslim traders. Instead magnitude of custom duties was increased day by day. In order to improve their lot the leaders appealed them to unite under the umbrella of Muslim Conference.[89] They rightly opined that the trade of the State would not flourish until the Government reduces the custom duties. While demanding its total abolition the President of the fourth annual session observed:[90]

> The burden of income tax is heavily pressing on the people of Kashmir. The civilized countries have reduced custom duties against this tax. But here, on the one hand, income tax has been imposed while on the other, custom duties have been increased which is a gross injustice.

The Muslim Conference was particularly concerned about the backwardness of Muslim traders as in Srinagar every lucrative trade was monopolized by the outsider non-Muslims. It also worked for inculcating and promoting interest among the people in favour of trade and commerce, believing that it was an effective means to come out of pauperism. The leadership even quoted the Hadith to persuade the Muslims in favour of *tijarat* (business).[91]

In his welcome address to the third annual session of the Muslim Conference held at Sopore in 1934, Khawaja Muhammad Maqbool demanded the supply of electricity from Sopore town to Handwara and Bandipora which were the tahsil and sub-tahsil headquarters. He also demanded that a metalled road be constructed between Sopore and Trahgam which would facilitate the communication and thus boost the trade and commerce. It was requested that new bridges be constructed at Sopore and Baramulla as there was only one bridge on river Puhroo upto Handwara and the old bridge of Baramulla was in a dilapidated condition. Since the Goarghami Nad area faced recurrent problems of

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89 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.304.

90 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.390-391.

91 Ibid.

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water scarcity leading to frequent famines, it was, therefore, urged that a canal be constructed from Marwar to save the situation.[92].

The Muslim Conference expressed its disappointment over the recruitment policy of the State, which was not changed even after the Glancy Commission recommendations. The Conference raised the issue forcefully right from its very first annual session.[93] It was demanded that the Muslims be given preference while making appointments so that the community-wise disparity of officials in different departments is removed. The leadership complained that in spite of the Glancy Commission recommendations no Muslim was appointed on any high position though many positions were lying vacant.[94] The President of the second annual session voiced his concern over the recruitment policy of the State by saying:[95]

> In spite of accepting Glancy Commission recommendations regarding proportionate appointment of different communities in Government offices no practical action has been taken on it during the last two years. Twenty positions that fell vacant were filled up by the non-Muslims. To protect the interests of the Muslim community the Glancy Commission had suggested that six monthly reports about new appointments and promotions be published showing therein proportionate share of Muslim community. However, no action has been taken so far. As such except for a few appointments in the Secretariat and a few in other departments, there has been no change in the recruitment policy of the Government and the Muslims are deprived of their rights.

In his welcome address to the third annual session of the Muslim Conference, Khawaja Muhammad Maqbool expressed his dissatisfaction over the recruitment policy of the State. According to him in spite of the

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92 Welcome address delivered by Khawaja Muhammad Maqbool to the Third Annual Session of Muslim Conference on November 11, 1934 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.324.

93 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the First Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 16, 1932 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.227-228.

94 Welcome address delivered by Raja Muhammad Akbar Khan to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 15, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.285.

95 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.299.

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fact that many posts were vacant, no high official had been taken from the Muslim community and the same situation applied to other gazetted and non-gazetted services. He argued that the under- representation of the Muslim employees in Government offices could be made up only by giving preference to the Muslim candidates. He also expressed reservations against the existing policy according to which if there were two vacant positions one would go to Hindus and another to Muslims. It was feared that by adopting this policy the existing disproportionate representation of the Muslims and Hindus in Government services could never be balanced.[96]

In his presidential address to the fourth annual session of the Conference, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas again complained against the under-representation of the Muslims in Government services though, according to him, Muslim candidates with requisite qualifications were available for all positions. Moreover, he was critical of the State policy to close the army services for the Kashmiri Muslims.[97] Though during his presidential address to the sixth annual session of the Conference (1938) Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah devoted much of the time to inviting non-Muslims to join the movement, the problem of the poor representation of Muslims in Government services was not left out. He made it clear that this demand, which is purely a humane problem, should not be given a communal colour. He argued that depriving eighty per cent Muslim population from adequate employment opportunities was in no way justifiable. He considered it a social rather than a communal problem and opined that any political party that comes to power, would not loose sight of the unprivileged sections of the society and would naturally give due share to the Muslims in different branches of administration. He considered it an insult for Kashmiri Muslims to deprive them of recruitment opportunities in military services of the State.[98]

The Conference drew the attention of the Government towards the pressing unemployment problem. In this context it made a significant

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96 Welcome address delivered by Khawaja Muhammad Maqbool to the Third Annual Session of Muslim Conference on November 11, 1934 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.325-326.

97 Presidential address delivered by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.392.

98 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abduallah to the Sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.468-469.

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point that while collecting the figures about unemployed youth the Government had committed a mistake of including only educated unemployed youth and ignored a large number of uneducated unemployed youth who too were suffering for want of a morsel of food. It emphasized that an unemployed graduate does not necessarily suffer from hunger and lack of the basic necessities of life, because eighty-five per cent unemployed educated youth belonged to prosperous trading, official and capitalist families. It rightly argued that their problem was not as critical and its solution as worthy of appreciation as that of any educated or uneducated youth belonging to a poor family. The Conference opined that for real development of a nation such important realities should be borne in mind. "But the authorities of irresponsible Government did not probably bother even to think whether there was a difference between the unemployment of the son of a minister, governor, high court judge, trader, *jagirdar* and that of the unemployed educated or uneducated poor man."[99]

The leadership also raised another important issue. It pertained to the heavy amount spent by the Government on defence. It was pointed out that out of Rs.2,47,00,000 of annual revenue the State spent half a crore on army though most of the communities of the State were debarred from the military service. The leadership also exposed the feudal expenditure pattern of the State revenues. According to it Rs.60,00,000 were annually spent on royal household and out of the rest the Prime Minister drew Rs.48,000 and his other colleagues Rs.30,000 each per annum as salaries. The other big officials and the secretaries drew between Rs.6,000 and Rs.18,000 as yearly salary. The leadership argued that in the given circumstances it was impossible to solve the unemployment problem.[100]

f. Methods of Political Work

In order to mobilize the masses and to press for its demands, the Muslim Conference adopted different modus operandi at different stages. One popular method adopted throughout its history was to convene annual sessions where the problems of the people were discussed and the response of the Government to the demands of the organisation was assessed and future charter of demands for redressing the social, political and economic grievances of the masses was also

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99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

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framed. These sessions also debated and deliberated upon how to strengthen the organization to make it effective for pressurising the Government to concede to its demands. The open annual sessions and the popular demands highlighted and pleaded therein made the Muslim Conference a popular organisation in every nook and corner of Kashmir. Besides annual sessions the Working Committee meetings were frequently convened to take stock of the overall situation of the movement and to take decisions with regard to the problems and challenges it faced.

No doubt the Conference mainly adopted moderate and constitutional methods to persuade the Government to concede to its demands; but at certain occasions it also adopted extremist methods, that were followed by repressive measures by the State. On 14 January 1934, Young Men's Muslim Association – the youth wing of the Conference, launched an agitation against the Government for its delay in implementing the Glancy Commission recommendations. The agitation spread like fire all over the Valley. The Government suppressed the agitation by arresting, exiling and imposing heavy fines upon the leaders of the Conference.[101] Among the prominent leaders who were sent to jail mention may be made of Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, Raja Muhammad Akbar Khan and Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad. Some prominent leaders namely Qazi Abdul Ghani, M.A Sabir, Moulana Masoodi, Sadar-ud-Din-Mujahid, Muhammad Maqbool Baihaqi, Sayyid Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din and Ghulam Mustfa Masoodi were exiled. The property of many workers was seized and heavy fines were imposed against them. Section 108-A of Criminal Procedure and 19-L were invoked. Fabricated cases were registered against the Muslim Conference workers. Most of the Zaildars, Numbardars (village heads) and other Government employees were forced to produce false evidences for involving the workers in fake cases.[102]

A meeting of the Working Committee of the Conference was convened at Lahore on 10 February 1934, where Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas was appointed as "Dictator" by dissolving the Working Committee. He was empowered to negotiate with the Government on the implementation of demands made by the Conference in its previous sessions. In addition to it he was directed to ask the Government about the

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101 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p. 300-302.

102 Welcome address delivered by Khawaja Muhammad Maqbool to the Third Annual Session of Muslim Conference on November 11, 1934 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.322-323.

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implementation of Glancy Commission recommendations. After returning from Lahore Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas presented a memorandum to the Government in this regard. The Government did not show any positive response towards the memorandum. In reaction to it Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas launched a Civil Disobedience Movement against the Government.[103] After a few days he was arrested. The Civil Disobedience Movement was called off on 19 August 1934, and the Muslim Conference leadership decided to contest elections and fight the Government in the legislature. In order to mobilize public opinion and to strengthen the movement at grass root level the leadership decided to organise the caders of Muslim Conference in every village, town, tahsil, district and subha. It was not satisfied with confining the existing organizational structure of the Conference; instead wanted to make the Conference a real mass movement. It is evident from the following excerpt of the address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the fifth annual session of the Conference on 15 May 1937:[104]

> So far the activities of the Muslim Conference have remained confined to cities and big towns only. We have not carried our message beyond educated people and businessmen. The population of cities and towns constitutes only nine per cent of the total population of the State. The rural population of the State is yet waiting for the programme of the Muslim Conference. The achievement of our objectives depends on carrying our message to the length and breadth of the State. We have to make the masses conscious about the meaning and the utility of a responsible Government. In order to make the Conference a mass movement it is necessary to organize the Conference at village, tahsil, and district level so that every adult person is registered as a member of the Conference.

In order to achieve this purpose the leaders of the Conference embarked upon the policy of taking the programme of the Conference everywhere by organising district, tahsil and village level committees. This was done by enrolling the adult people of each area as its registered members. The Conference opened a *bait-ul-maal* to which the Muslims contributed *zakaat* and *sadqat* (alms). The branches of the central *bait-ul-maal* were opened in every district and tahsil and the workers of the

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103 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmir Fight-For Freedom*, vol. I, p.496-497; Chaudhary Ghulam Abass, *Kashmakash*, p.131.

104 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Fifth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on May 15, 1937 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.427.

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Conference were assigned the job of the collection of the funds and donations.[105] Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad was assigned the charge of the *bait-ul-maal* and it was out of the funds and donations raised by this institution that the permanent headquarters of the Conference called Mujahid Manzil were constructed at Srinagar.[106] The establishment of the *bait-ul-maal* not only helped to fulfil the financial needs of the organisation but it also involved the people actively into the movement, besides, educating them about the programme and activities of the Conference. From July to December 1937, about 20,000 members were enrolled in Srinagar alone and a significant work was also done in the villages where the pace of enrolment was not as fast as in the city.[107] The Muslim Conference also organised Volunteer Corps whose function was to work for popularizing the programme and facilitating the work of the Conference. The commander of this Corps was Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad.[108]

There is no denying the fact that the leadership of the Conference had a tilt towards progressive politics from the very beginning. But owing to the existing socio-economic and political conditions of the State it had to derive support from religion to rally the people round it. Initially the Muslim religious places like mosques and shrines were used as platforms. Khanqahi Mualla and Jamia Masjid Srinagar were the main centres where the mass meetings were organized. The holidays of the Muslims like Eid-i-Mīlād [birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)] and some other auspicious occasions also provided an opportunity to the leadership to mobilize the masses in favour of the movement. On such occasions the leaders of the Conference presented their programme through religious idioms.

In order to persuade the Government to accede to its demands the Conference called for *hartals* and organizing demonstrations. On such events it also called mass meetings wherein the leaders delivered speeches criticizing the Government and justifying the mass agitation. On the whole the modus operandi of Muslim Conference was based on

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105 Ibid.

106 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.302.

107 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.428.

108 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol. I, p.290.

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democratic methods. Like the Indian national movement its strategy was based on the formula of Struggle-Truce-Struggle (S-T-S). In this strategy phases of extra-legal mass movements alternate with more 'passive' phases, during which political activity is carried on within the confines of the legal space, and the struggle proceeds through stages without losing its anti-imperialist edge or sight of the goal of complete independence at any stage. In this strategy, ideological struggle and popular consciousness and the political activity of the masses play central roles. This strategy bears a close resemblance to the strategy of war of position as put forward and elaborated by Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist thinker. Under this strategy the state power is not seized in a single historic movement but through prolonged popular struggle on a moral, political and ideological level; where reserves of counter-hegemony are built up over the years through progressive stages and where the phases of struggle alternate with 'passive' phases.

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From Muslim Conference to National Conference

> You complain that the Hindus belonging to the vested interests are reactionary and stand in the way of our progress. But have we not had the same experience in the case of capitalist Muslims also? It is significant as well as hopeful that despite many difficulties some non-Muslims have co-operated with us though their number is very small. Their sincerity and moral courage make us feel their strength. We must, therefore, open our doors to all such Hindus and Sikhs who, like ourselves, believe in freeing the country from the shackles of irresponsible rule.
>
> Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah

The conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference in 1939 was an event of far-reaching consequences in the freedom movement of Kashmir. It was not an abrupt development but the culmination of a gradual process that began as early as the formation of Muslim Conference. The present chapter aims at discussing all such developments that paved way towards the formation of a common platform with an objective of making the freedom struggle of Kashmir broad-based. It will also analyse as to what extent the purpose of common platform was achieved?

a. Formation of Common Platform

It is evident from the preceding chapter that the Muslim Conference was a secular and progressive organisation. True, the leaders of the Conference came forward in the Muslim name but their programme and manifesto was as broad as that of any progressive political organisation of the Indian Subcontinent. They fought against exploitation regardless of the religion of the exploiter. In the backdrop

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of such secular ideology the Muslim leadership influenced some liberal minded non-Muslim leaders. Besides, the Conference made persistent efforts to ensure a joint struggle of the Muslims and non-Muslims. It did not miss even the smallest opportunity to strive for this cherished goal. In all of its annual sessions the Conference stressed on forging Hindu-Muslim unity.

In its inaugural session, the President of the Conference publically declared that the aim of the Muslim Conference was to redress the grievances of all the communities irrespective of caste, creed and colour. On 7 March 1933, a Sub-committee was set up to contact non-Muslim leaders to seek their co-operation and to persuade them to participate in the movement. However, the Committee was unable to achieve any positive results because of the suspicion and non-cooperation of the Hindu leaders.[1]

In the welcome address to the second annual session of the Muslim Conference the non-Muslims were again fervently appealed to forget the past and join hands with the Muslims to fight for the common interests of all the communities:[2]

> Before concluding my address let me tell my Hindu and Sikh brethren that all of us have lived cordially and brotherly all along. In future it is impossible for us to live in separation. It is in the nature of human beings that they occasionally fight with each other but it does not mean that they would remain divided for all times to come. The only way towards the overall welfare of all the communities is our mutual understanding and unity. In these circumstances I would not hesitate to request you to come forward, forget the past and to stand united in order to ensure an era of friendship, love and peace.

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1 The Committee consisted of Khawaja Sad-ud-Din Shawl, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad Ashai, Agha Sayyid Hussain Shah Jalali, Moulvi Muhammad Abdullah, Pir Hussam-ud-Din Gilani, Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad Bhat, Mian Ahmad Yar Khan, Moulvi Muhammad Hussain, Munshi Abdul Aziz and Abdul Majid Quraishi. For details see the Presidential address delivered by Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq to the Special Session of Muslim Confrerence, June 11, 1939 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.497.

2 Welcome address delivered by Raja Muhammad Akbar Khan to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 15, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.285-286.

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In his Presidential address to the second annual session of Muslim Conference Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah again tried to bring home to the non-Muslims that the struggle of the Muslim Conference was not meant for one particular community, instead considering the past record, it served the interests of all the communities of the State:[3]

> So far the achievements of Muslim Conference have benefited all the communities. These achievements include the grant of proprietary rights in land, concessions in connection with the use of forests, abolition of tax on cattle and *nazrana*, freedom of press and platform, right to formation of associations and the reforms related to Assembly, District Boards and Municipal Boards. There is no special treatment for Muslims in these achievements and all the communities irrespective of caste and creed have been equally benefited. But at times the Hindus, in view of their past hegemony, have got a lions share.

The President of Muslim Conference issued a written statement on 29 June 1934 against the Franchise Committee Report. Through this statement the Conference again requested the non-Muslims to join hands with the Muslims and assured them every kind of help and safeguard:[4]

> As a well wisher of the country and its minorities I would like to appeal you sincerely on behalf of the Muslims that they are ready to provide you as much security and constitutional rights as the majority of India is providing to its minorities and it is also possible that we can prove more generous. Come and say goodbye to the past. The Constituent Assembly framed by the Government cannot be of any benefit to any of the communities of the State. If we persistently demand justice you are not supposed to favour only verbally? But you have to come forward and prove your spirit of nationalism. In doing so you should not act ostentatiously but the change of mind is needed and the spirit of courtship must flow from hearts.

As already mentioned, the Glancy Commission which made several recommendations towards the welfare of the Kashmiri Muslims had four non-official members. Two representatives nominated in consultation

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3 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.298.

4 Statement issued to the press by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, President Muslim Conference, against the Franchise Committee Report, June 29, 1934 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.316-317.

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with Muslim leaders were Khawaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai from Kashmir Valley and Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas from Jammu province. Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, then a young graduate, who had already become known in Srinagar as a rising liberal leader, represented Kashmiri Pandits, while Mr. Lok Nath Sharma from Jammu represented the Hindus of Jammu province. The latter withdrew from its deliberations in December 1931, because it rejected his demand for the exclusion from consideration of the question of Hindu converts right to ancestral property, which had been raised by the Muslims.[5] The credit goes to Prem Nath Bazaz who as a great visionary supported the genuine aspirations of the Muslims. His conduct as a member of the Commission was extremely honourable. The Pandits suggested him to resign from the Commission but he boldly rejected their suggestion. Despite the social boycott from his co-religionists, he did not yield but continued his co-operation with the Commission.[6] In addition to its other recommendations the Commission stressed upon the fair distribution of Government services among all the communities of the State and reduced the academic qualification for lower positions in order to facilitate the entry of Muslim candidates in Government services. It evoked a stiff reaction from the Kashmiri Pandits and they started an agitation in Srinagar called Roti Agitation.[7] It was named so as the Pandits alleged that the Commission had deprived them of their livelihood.

With the publication of Glancy Commission report in May 1932, it became clear that all the Hindus were not against the reforms and a section to whom Prem Nath Bazaz was representing, were anxious to see that the legitimate grievances of Muslims are redressed and a progressive form of Government established in the State. A historic meeting between Prem Nath Bazaz and Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah took place in July 1932, at Chashma Shahi Garden wherein a decision towards the formation of common platform was taken.[8] The meeting proved to be of great significance. On the last day of October 1932, Prem Nath Bazaz started the first newspaper, *Vitasta* in Kashmir province to popularize the idea of secular politics and fight for the

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5 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, pp.208-209.

6 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol.I, p.441. For social boycott of the Pandits against Prem Nath Bazaz see Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir*, vol.I, p.236.

7 Ibid.

8 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.164.

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establishment of a responsible Government in the State. This organ did not live long because of the hostility of the reactionary Hindus who tried to suppress it by every means at their command.[9] Nevertheless, the daily rendered a great service to the cause of nationalism. Though the Legislative Assembly established by the Government in 1934 was powerless, it served a good purpose in that the elected representatives of the Muslims and non-Muslims were brought together on the floor of the house where they began to understand and appreciate each other's point of view.[10] They began to realize that most of the basic problems were common to both and it helped in the formation of a joint platform.

After the Sopore session (1934) which was the third annual session of Muslim Conference, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah left for plains to renew contacts with the leaders of 'political thought' over there. It was during this tour that he met Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru at Lahore railway station and this meeting proved to be a turning point in the history of Kashmir freedom struggle. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah accompanied Pandit Nehru on his tour to N.W. F.P and it was there that the latter laid a profound impact on the political thought of the former.[11] Pandit Nehru had a detailed discussion with Shaikh about the nature and objectives of the Kashmir movement. The Shaikh made it clear to Pandit Nehru that Muslim Conference was a secular organisation. But the Congress leader suggested him to broaden the sphere of the movement in such a way that the non-Muslims would have no excuse in joining it. Besides, it would also leave no room for the Indian Hindu communalists and their press to continue their propaganda that "Kashmir movement had a communal character".[12] It was only a few days after this meeting that Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah addressed a press conference in Lahore at the residence of Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchloo, a prominent Congress leader of Punjab. He remarked:[13]

> The communal tension in Kashmir is to a great extent the result of the propaganda of Punjabi communal leaders. We want that the people of Punjab do not interfere in our matters. My future programme would be to act according to the ideology of the Indian National Congress. After returning to Kashmir I would lay

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9 Ibid., p.165.

10 Ibid., p.166.

11 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.227-228

12 Ibid.

13 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, pp.327-328.

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down the foundation of an organisation, which would serve national interests.

On 1st August 1935, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz started a journal called *Hamdard* in Urdu to popularize the ideology and to lay foundations of progressive nationalism in the State. Dr. Saif-ud-Din Kitchloo performed the inauguration of the first issue of the journal in a big public meeting at Hazuri Bagh, Srinagar. From its beginning *Hamdard* attempted to blaze a new trail in the affairs of the State. It was a standard bearer of democracy and unity of all Kashmiris without any consideration of caste and creed they belonged to. It published articles bitterly and frankly critical of orthodox views and thus played a dynamic role towards the formation of common platform.[14]

Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas also tried to ally the fears of non-Muslims and requested them to join hands with the Muslims in their struggle for the establishment of a responsible Government in the State. Like Indian Muslims, the Kashmiri Pandits also had entertained suspicion that the establishment of a democratic set-up in the State would amount to the domination of the majority community. Like other leaders Chaudhary Abbas also tried to bring home to the non-Muslims that whatever the Muslims achieved so far as a result of their struggle served the interests of all the communities. He requested the non-Muslims to join hands with their Muslim brethren in order to fight shoulder to shoulder for the cause of the State people:[15]

> While forgetting the bitterness of the past I on behalf of the Muslims of the State sincerely appeal to my non-Muslim countrymen to extend their co-operation to us. I assure that the Muslims have no intention to deprive any community of its legitimate rights and they are seeking justice for every one and demand for themselves only those rights that belong to them. Let us all unite together to struggle for the development of our country. Hope that the non-Muslim leaders in the interest of the country will consider my appeal courageously and honestly; they must rest assured that in it lies the real good for their community.

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14 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.167; For further details about *Hamdard* see Sabri, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, pp.150-151.

15 Presidential address delivered to the Fourth Annual Session of Muslim Conference by Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas Khan on October 27, 1935 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.394.

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> We have full confidence that the poor among the Hindus and Sikhs will in near future join our struggle for the achievement of responsible Government. We should continue our efforts in this direction.

The secular character of the Muslim Conference and the repeated requests of the Muslim leaders to their non-Muslim brethren ultimately bore fruits and the liberal minded non-Muslim leaders like Prem Nath Bazaz and Sardar Budh Singh began to express their ideas of nationalism from the platform of Muslim Conference from 1935.[16] As mentioned in the preceding chapter, on 8 May 1936 Muslim Conference observed a Responsible Government Day and called for the participation of the masses in its celebrations irrespective of caste and creed. The appeal did not go in vain. At many places notably Srinagar, Poonch and Jammu, presidents of the public meetings held in this connection as also the principal speakers at them were either Hindus or Sikhs.[17]

It was under the guidance of Prem Nath Bazaz that an organisation of young men called Kashmir Youth League came into existence in 1936. It believed in the equality of all people in the State and held that "there was no distinction between young men or women on the basis of religious beliefs they professed".[18] It was in the interest of Hindu-Muslim unity that the students of schools and colleges belonging to different communities organised Kashmir Students Union. The first session of this Union was held on 4 November 1936, wherein forceful speeches were delivered in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity and the responsible Government.[19] On 7 January 1937, the foundation of another organisation called Muslim Socialist Party was laid under the leadership of Abdul Aziz Mir. All these activities proved congenial and helpful towards the formation of a common platform of all the communities of the State.[20]

The fifth annual session of the Muslim Conference was held at Poonch in May 1937, under the presidentship of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah. He once again requested the non-Muslims to join the

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16 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.II, p.19.

17 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.167.

18 Ibid.

19 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, p.348.

20 Ibid.

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movement and expressed his hope that in near future the poor and exploited sections of the non-Muslim communities would join it.[21] The sixth annual session of the Conference was held in March 1938, at Jammu, again under the Presidentship of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah. In his address he observed:[22]

> Like us the majority of Hindus and Sikhs in the State has immensely suffered due to irresponsible Government. They are also steeped in deep ignorance and have to pay various taxes. They are also in debt and are facing starvation. Establishment of responsible Government is as much a necessity for them as for us. Sooner or later these people are bound to join our ranks. No amount of propaganda can keep them away from us.

It was in the same session that Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah spoke in favour of the conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference, which generated heated discussions and confrontations in the ranks of Muslim Conference leadership.[23] No doubt Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah as an outstanding leader of the movement wanted to convert the Muslim Conference into the National Conference earlier, in order to facilitate the participation of the non-Muslims without any objection and excuse, but he was waiting for the evolution of a favourable atmosphere towards this direction.[24] On 24 June 1938, he placed a resolution embodying his views about the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference before the Working Committee. The resolution said:[25]

> Whereas in the opinion of the Working Committee the time has now come when all the progressive forces in the country will rally under one banner to fight for the achievement of responsible Government. The Working Committee recommends to the General Council that in the forth-coming session of the Conference the name and constitution of the organisation be so

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21 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Fifth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on May 15, 1937 vide Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, pp.350.351.

22 Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to the Sixth Annual Session of Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, pp.449-450.

23 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.232.

24 Ibid., p.238.

25 Resolution placed before the Working Committee of Muslim Conference. June 24, 1938 vide *Dastawaizāt*, p.481.

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altered and amended that all such people who desire to participate in this struggle may easily become members of the Conference irrespective of their caste and creed.

The meeting of the Working Committee lasted for fifty-two hours and heated discussions were held on the issue of conversion and some thoughtful details were put forward in the opposition of the resolution. At one stage Mirza Muhammad Afzal Beg co-operated with Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, Moulvi Abdullah Vakil and Khawaja Ahmad-ud-Din Banihali and opposed the move. But majority of the Working Committee members spoke in favour of the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. The members who opposed the resolution and voted against it include Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, Abdul Majid Quraishi, Shaikh Ahmad-ud-Din Banihali and a few others.[26] They were asked to resign which they did not. Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas and his colleagues had an apprehension that the conversion would weaken the movement because the non-Muslims would not participate in National Confernce sincerely but only for the safeguard of their vested interests.[27] Besides, they presumed that the opponents of the Muslim Conference would launch a disinformation campaign against the new organisation in the name of religion and the Government would get an opportunity to root out the movement. However, the resolution was passed with a majority vote and was recommended for the approval of the General Council.[28]

As referred in the preceding chapter that on 8 August 1938, Muslim Conference observed a Responsible Government Day. It was celebrated throughout the State with great enthusiasm. The public meetings called on this day were again participated by the Hindus as well as Sikhs.[29] With all these developments it appeared that the Dogra Government represented by its Premier N. Gopal Swami Ayyengar felt uneasy because of this new trend in the State politics. The authorities began to provoke the people by gagging prominent workers and by imposing other restrictions on their activities. Early in August 1939, it became evident that a conflict between the people and the Government

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26 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.232; It is to be noted that the author has not mentioned the name of Abdul Majid Quraishi.

27 Ibid., p.233.

28 Ibid.

29 *Hamdard*, August 9, 1938.

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was in the offing.[30] It looked doubtful if the Muslim Conference would be allowed to hold its plenary session to ratify the resolution passed by the Working Committee in favour of the conversion of Muslim Conference into the National Conference. A manifesto was, therefore, prepared and published on 29 August 1938, under the signatures of twelve leaders representing Muslims as well as non-Muslims. These leaders include:[31]

> (1) Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, President Muslims Conference (2) Pandit Kishap Bandhu, editor, *Kesari*.(3) Sardar Budh Singh, Ex-member Assembly (4) Pandit Jai Lal Kilam, Ex-member Assembly (5) Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Ex-member Glancy Commission (6) Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq, Member Assembly (7) Moulvi Muhammad Sayyid Masoodi, Member Assembly and Municipal Commissioner (8) Pandit Sham Lal Saraf, President Kashmiri Hindu Progressive Party (9) Mian Ahmad Yar Khan, Member Assembly (10) Dr. Shambhu Nath Pushan, M.B.B.S (11) Mirza Muhammad Afzal Beg, Member Assembly and (12) Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, Commander Volunteer Corps.

In order to have a comprehensive understanding about the programme of the leadership at this particular stage, it is pertinent to reproduce the manifesto verbatim. In the annals of Kashmir freedom movement this document is called as the Manifesto of National Demand. The document runs as follows:[32]

> As is now well known that there is a nationwide movement afoot among the people of Jammu and Kashmir to bring about a complete change in the social and political outlook of the people. This movement is not confined to any particular community or section of the public but all classes of people have begun participating in it, with the fullest consciousness of the issues it involves. But we do make it perfectly clear at the very outset that our loyalty to His Highness's person and throne is unshakeable and needs no reiteration.
>
> The ultimate goal of this movement is the achievement of complete responsible Government under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur. But, as sponsors of this national

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30 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.169.

31 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.II, p.35.

32 Manifesto of National Demand issued on August 29, 1938.

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movement we feel that it is our bounden duty to acquaint our countrymen as also others who are interested in it, with the immediate objective we have in view.

Our movement is essentially a movement of peace and goodwill. Immediately, it aims at securing the elementary and basic rights of citizenship. It shall certainly try to bring about such a state of affairs in this country as would make it possible for even the humblest subject of His Highness to contribute to the making of his own destiny. Our demands are modest, but they have the force of reason and justice behind them. Not that we are not conscious of our limitations, not that we are not fully aware of the fact that the Government knows its mind and has resources at its disposal to enforce its will. But, in the soul-stirring words of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru: However, much we may be enfeebled in body, our souls have never been, nor will ever be, killed. Our movement has a gigantic urge behind it. It is the urge of hunger and starvation, which proposals it onwards in most adverse circumstances.

To ever growing menace of unemployment amongst our educated young men and also among the illiterate masses in the country, the incidence of numerous taxes, the burden of exorbitant land revenue, the appalling waste of human life due to want of adequate modern medical assistance, the miserable plight of uncared for thousands of labourers outside the State boundaries and, in the face of all this the patronage that is being extended by the Government in the shape of subsidies and other amenities to outside capitalists, as also the top heavy administration that daily becomes heavier, point to only one direction, that the present conditions can never be better as long a change is not made in the basic principles that are underlying the present system of government.

Our cause is both righteous, reasonable and just. We want to be the makers of our own destinies, and we want to shape the ends of things according to our choice, of course, under the august, patronage of His Highness. This we cannot do, so long as a healthy change is not affected in the present system of government. We have also come to the conclusion that without a change, it is impossible for the communities individually or collectively to make progress. We are, therefore, of the firm belief that the Government of His Highness should be modelled on the following lines:-

a) The present system of administration in the State shall be replaced by responsible Government, subject to the general control and

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residuary powers of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur as hereinafter mentioned.

b) The Ministry shall be responsible to the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature and shall have, subject to such responsibility, power to control the expenditure of the revenues of the State and also to make such grants and appropriations on any part of those revenues, or of any other property, which is at present under the control or disposal of the Council, as reserved expenditure, save and except the following, which shall remain under the control of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur:-

1. Expenditure on the Military Service.
2. Expenditure classed as Political and Foreign.
3. Payment of all debts and liabilities hitherto lawfully contracted and incurred by His Highness-in-Council on account of Government of Kashmir.
4. The Dharmarth Trust.

c) The Principle of responsibility to the Legislature shall be introduced in all the branches of administration of the Government subject to general control, reservations and residuary powers vested in His Highness in respect of control of Military, Foreign and Political affairs, etc., provided that the proposal of His Highness for appropriations of any revenues or moneys for Military or other expenditure for Foreign and Political purposes shall be submitted to the vote of the Legislature, but that His Highness shall have power notwithstanding the vote of the Assembly to appropriate upto a fixed maximum any sum His Highness may consider necessary for such expenditure.

d) The Legislature shall consist entirely of members elected by constituencies, founded on the system of adult franchise. Provision should be made for the representation of labour, trade, landlords and educational interests in the Legislature by means of election.

e) The election to the Legislature shall be made on the basis of joint electorates; seats should be reserved for the minorities, and all safeguards, and weightages should be guaranteed to them in the constitution for the protection of their linguistic, religious, cultural, political and economic rights according to the principles enunciated, accepted or acted upon by the Indian National Congress from time to time. In addition to the above, the religious rights and sentiments of all the

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communities should always be respected and not interfered with.

f) All the subjects of the State, without distinction of caste and creed, shall, be admitted for service in all armies of defence, and for that purpose His Highness shall be assisted by a Minister responsible to the Assembly.

g) No subject of His Highness shall be liable to suffer in liberty, life, property or of Association of free speech or in respect of writing except under sentence by ordinary Court of Justice and as a result of lawful and open trial.

All this cannot be given for the mere asking. It requires wise statesmanship from the side of the Government. Our earnest desire is to avoid a strike. Let the Government make an announcement accepting the above principles and if His Highness's Government is pleased to discuss these principles with us, we shall certainly and whole heartedly co-operate for this purpose. We are sure that if this is done, there will reign peace all round.

In order to ratify the Manifesto of National Demand, a public meeting was convened at Hazratbal, Srinagar on 29 August 1938. It was called there because the Government had promulgated Section 144 within the Municipal areas of Srinagar, which provided for ban on public meetings. Thus, the Manifesto of National Demand was ratified by the people with great enthusiasm. The leaders decided to call another mass meeting at Pratab Park, Srinagar. But they were arrested and put behind the bars.[33]

It would not be out of place to focus on some other reasons, which in one way or the other paved a way for the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. While justifying this historic move Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah in his autobiography writes that Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his visit to the Valley in June 1936 had impressed upon the Muslim leadership to consider non-Muslims as an integral part of their movement and to instill confidence in them.[34] No doubt, Jinnah had suggested the Muslim leadership to assure the minorities about the safeguard of their rights and a fair treatment after the establishment of a democratic set-up in the State[35], but it is to be

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33 General Secretary, All India States Peoples Conference, *Kashmir*, p.30.

34 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.239 and 305.

35 Ibid.

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remembered that he did not suggest any change in the nomenclature and constitution of the Muslim Conference.[36] Moreover, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah writes that in 1937, he received a similar suggestion from Sir Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal about the formation of a united political front of all the communities of the State, as he had received from Jawahar Lal Nehru earlier.[37] But it appears doubtful because seven years earlier, in 1930 Sir Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal had himself presided over the Muslim League session of Allahabad and had adumbrated his theory of Panislamism and a separate state for the Muslims of the Subcontinent in his Presidential address.[38] Thus, there arises no question of such a type of suggestion being made by him as late as 1937, when the forces of Muslim nationalism were gaining ground all over India.

After his arrest on 29 August 1938, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah was lodged in Kuthwa Jail. It was during the course of his imprisonment that he had a thorough study of Tarjamān-ul-Qurān by Moulana Azad. It laid a profound impact on his mind and strengthened his nationalist ideas.[39]

It was in December 1927, that an organisation was set-up by the Indian National Congress called All India States Peoples Conference under the leadership of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. It was aimed at struggling for peoples' rights in the Princely States. It convened a conference on 15, 16 and 17 February 1939, at Ludhiana. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru had invited Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and his colleagues for their participation in the conference. In order to gain the favour of the Indian Nationalists, the leaders of Muslim Conference including their non-Muslim colleagues deemed it necessary to demonstrate their commitment to nationalism, by changing the name and constitution of their organisation before the Ludhiana conference. But it could not become possible owing to their imprisonment. Most of the leaders were released on 11 February 1939, and just after their release they went to Ludhiana in order to participate in the session of

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36 For details see the gist of the address delivered by Muhammad Ali Jinnah on June 3, 1936, at Pather Masjid, Srinagar, vide Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.II, pp.22-23.

37 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.228-229.

38 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.147.

39 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.235.

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All India States Peoples Conference.[40] The prominent leaders who participated in the Ludhiana conference were Sardar Budh Singh, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, Pandit Jai Lal Kilam, Prem Nath Bazaz, Moulana Masoodi, Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq and Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Naqash.[41] Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and Pandit Kishap Bandhu could not participate in the conference as they were still in jail and were released on 24 and 25 July respectively. At his release on 24 February, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah reached Chatabal, Srinagar, where from he was taken in a procession to Pather Masjid. There he delivered a forceful speech in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity and the formation of a common platform. The procession included people from all the communities.[42]

It was in March 1939, that Indian National Congress called its annual session at Tripura. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah was specially invited to this session by the Congress President, Rajandra Prasad. He participated in the session along with some of his colleagues namely Pandit Kishap Bandhu, Prem Nath Bazaz, Moulana Masoodi and Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad.[43] Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah presided over one of the meetings of this session and delivered a speech in which he exposed the false propaganda of the Princes against the movements of their respective states. He made an appeal to the leaders of British India for not relying upon this baseless propaganda, which was carried in Hyderabad in the name of Islam and in Travencore in the name of Christianity.[44] The session was an event of rejoice for both Indian nationalists as well as the leaders of Kashmir. The Congress leaders were happy as they got the support of a well-organised political party from a Muslim majority State. They also got an opportunity to substantiate their claim against All India Muslim League that the Indian National Congress represented all the communities of India irrespective of caste and creed. The leaders of Kashmir were highly pleased, as they were able to win the support of an apex anti-colonial organization of the Subcontinent.[45]

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40 *File No. 14, Part II, AISPC papers,* Nehru Memorial Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi.

41 Ibid.

42 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.II, p.40.

43 Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, Personal Diary, March 17, 1939, Item 3.

44 *The Aina*, Weekly, Srinagar, December 7, 1975.

45 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.II, p.45.

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A Special Session of the Muslim Conference was held at Srinagar on 10 and 11 June 1939, under the Presidentship of Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq who was well known for his leftist ideas. Chairman of the Reception Committee Moulana Masoodi introduced the following resolutions:[46]

> The Special Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference approves the Working Committee resolution number 5 of June 1938 for the change of the name of the Conference and for bringing about the necessary amendments and changes in its constitution which was confirmed by the General Council in its session held on 27 April 1939.
>
> The Conference, therefore, decides that it shall henceforth be named as All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and every citizen of Jammu and Kashmir, whether male or female shall irrespective of his religion and race be entitled to become the member of the Conference provided he undertakes in writing to strive for setting up of a responsible Government and achievement of civil liberties as his political goal.
>
> This session also resolves that until the next session the existing Working Committee and the General Council, the office bearers and the delegates to this Conference shall function in the same capacity as office bearers and members of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

The special session of the Conference was attended by 176 delegates representing all the districts of the State. In his Presidential address Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq said:[47]

> Any responsible Government cannot be the Government of any particular class or party or religious community. But every individual comprising the forty lakh inhabitants of the State will be its component part and will have the same share in running it. It is, therefore, essential that in the struggle for the establishment of responsible Government every citizen of the State, irrespective of religion or race, should be able to participate and make his contribution. For channelising these sacrifices and conducting the movement in an orderly manner a common platform in the shape of a single organisation is the first important step.

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46 Resolution presented by Moulana Masoodi before the Special Session of Muslim Conference on June 10, 1939 vide Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight For Freedom*, vol.I, pp.528-529.

47 Presidential address delivered by Khawaja Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq to the Special Session of Muslim Conference on June 11, 1939 vide Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.I, pp.378-382.

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> The proposal to change the name of the party moved in the last session at Jammu was kept pending so that on one hand, public opinion is elicited and on the other, the doubts existing in certain sections of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in this behalf, could be removed. But much time had not as yet elapsed when political conditions in the Subcontinent began rapidly changing. The question of the State's participation in the Federation assumed greater importance. The Viceroy intensified his efforts to win over the Princes and our State silently decided to join the Federation. It is for this reason that the question of forming a common platform could not be further postponed.

Some of the delegates including Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas expressed their fears privately about the future of the movement once the change was effected. As mentioned earlier, Chaudhary Abbas and other likeminded leaders were not sure that the State Hindus would sincerely support the new organisation.[48] A meeting was held in which Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, Prem Nath Bazaz and Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas discussed all these doubts and fears. It was obvious that the Hindus would prefer Dogra rule to a democratic Government. But it was presumed that the re-orientation would immensely strength the forces of freedom and enable the Hindu and the Sikh progressives and patriots to participate in the struggle.[49]

Chaudhary Abbas and his supporters also feared that the National Conference would become handmaid of the Indian National Congress. But Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, Prem Nath Bazaz and Chaudhary Abbas solemnly declared that it would be most harmful and dangerous to bring the Kashmir freedom movement under the influence of some outside organisation. It was decided that the organisation would keep aloof from Indian National Congress as well as Muslim League. On these assurances the misgivings of Chaudhary Abbas were allayed and he gave his fullest support to the resolution in the Special Session of the Conference.[50] Consequently all the prominent leaders from Jammu including Mr. A.R. Sagar, Chaudhary Hamidullah Khan, Hakim Muhammad Hussain and some others attended the Special Session and except for Chaudhary Hamidullah supported the Working Committee

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48 Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, *Kashmakash* , pp.177-178.

49 Ibid.

50 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, pp.170-171.

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resolution.[51] The resolution was passed with an overwhelming majority of delegates supporting it and only four hands were raised in opposition. These leaders include Moulvi Abdullah, Advocate, Khawaja Ghulam Ahmad Ganai Baderwahi, Shaikh Ahmad Din Banihali and Chaudhary Hamidullah Khan.[52] Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas Khan and Allah Rakha Saghar delivered their speeches in the session favouring the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. Thus, the morning of 11 June 1939, sounded the death knell of the Muslim Conference and heralded the day with the news of the birth of the National Conference. [53] It is worthwhile to quote the observations of Pir Giyas-ud-Din, a contemporary progressive politician, which he had made about the ideological orientation of the Kashmir freedom movement:[54]

> It will be apt to note here that the ideological inspiration, which permeated our movement during this period was that of this great Kashmiri Brahmin (Dr. Iqbal) who remained a unique inspirer of the movement from 1931 till his death in 1938. This period should be called as era of Iqbal in our movement. It would not be incorrect to designate the following period as the Nehru era. Like his predecessor this great Kashmiri Brahmin through his political acumen put the stamp of his ideas on the political scene from 1938 onwards.

b. Response of Kashmiri Pandits to National Conference

There is no denying the fact that the leaders like Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, Prem Nath Bazaz and Sardar Budh Singh sincerely believed in reorienting State politics on secular lines, but some basic social, economic and mental structures of the society frustrated the move to be translated into reality. A few Pandit leaders, no doubt, joined the movement, but they too resigned within a short span of one and a half years.[55] Disgusted with the social response of the

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51 Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight-For Freedom*, vol. I, pp.530-531.

52 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.232

53 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.171.

54 Pir Giyas-ud-Din, *Main trends of the History of the Kashmir Freedom Struggle* vide Yasin and Rafiqi, *History of the Freedom Struggle in Jammu and Kashmir*, (ed.), p.86.

55 For details see Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.245-247.

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historic move of the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah exclaimed:[56]

اپنے بھی خفا، بے گانے بھی ناخوش

Estranged I find my own people as well as the strangers.

To substantiate the fact that the Kashmiri Pandits refused to respond to the clarion call for a joint struggle even after the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference, it is significant to quote another architect of the Hindu-Muslim unity, Prem Nath Bazaz:[57]

> It was the biggest grievance of the State Hindus, both progressive and the reactionaries, that the Freedom Movement of the country was conducted by the popular Muslim leaders in the name of religion and on the basis of communalism. This, they averred, made the minorities apprehensive and also made it very difficult for non-Muslims to take due share in the freedom struggle. This was doubtless an irrefutable charge which the Muslim leaders met with an equally serious challenge by changing the name of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference and by throwing its doors open for non-Muslim patriots to come in. It was, therefore, expected that Hindu publicists and politicians would enthusiastically hail the change and soon after the successful termination of the Special Session, Hindus in large numbers would enroll themselves as primary members of the National Conference. This did not happen.

The basic factor that came in the way of a common platform was the disparate socio-economic conditions of the two communities that emanated from the 'medieval character' of the Dogra Raj. Needless to repeat, the Dogra rulers bestowed all lucrative positions upon their co-religionists and patronized them by endowing various types of land grants. As such it was natural to find the non-Muslims showing cold shoulder to the new move that would strengthen the movement against their patron – the Maharaja. It is worthwhile to quote Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah:[58]

> While on the one hand the educated Muslims did not appreciate our decision of the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference, on the other hand the non-Muslims showed more disdain

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56 Ibid., p.244.

57 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.177

58 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.245.

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> towards us. They had wedded their vested interests with the rulers and considered Kashmir a Hindu State. Their rich and educated sections dominated them. As such they were not ready to support any such movement that would militate against the interests of the rulers and their own vested interests. With great difficulty a few youths of the community joined the National Conference but they too faced persistent pressures from their community; and they looked at any measure that was taken by us with suspicion.

Being a pampered minority, the Kashmiri Pandits had perceived doubts and fears against the freedom struggle that espoused the cause of democracy, social justice and freedom from exploitation and tyranny. All these goals were apparently striking at the roots of the privileged position of the Pandit community. It was this suspicion that also accounted for the failure of a common platform.[59]

It may be pertinent to mention here that the Pandit leaders who were taken in the Working Committee as well as the General Council of the National Conference had worked for years in various communalist organizations and as such they joined the movement with a deeply embedded communal mentality which was difficult to be compromised with as demanded by the reoriented freedom struggle. Prem Nath Bazaz frankly admits the fact:[60]

> The Special Session of the Muslim Conference, which changed the name, and the constitution of the organization, authorized the Working Committee to co-opt a few prominent non-Muslim workers in all elected bodies after they had been duly enrolled as primary members of the Conference, to give the organization the appearance of a nationalist body. Accordingly some Hindu and Sikh public workers were taken in the Working Committee as well as the General Council. Nearly all new entrants had worked for years in different communalist Hindu and Sikh organizations and had risen to eminence by espousing the cause of obscurantism, reaction and repression. By merely joining the National Conference it was difficult for them to totally eschew their old mentality and the political doctrines in support of which they had fought for many years. At best from being Hindu communalists they could take a big jump and become Hindu Nationalists. Above that they could not

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59 An interview with Jagan Nath Sathu, a contemporary socialist leader and close associate of Prem Nath Bazaz, August 22, 1999.

60 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, pp.173-174.

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rise. Though all of them paid extravagant tributes to secularism in season and out of season, that noble creed still existed only in name.

Such being the case, the organization lacked the element of adjustment and compromise, which was a pre-requisite for the success of a joint platform in a structured and plural society that was Kashmir. It is, therefore, not surprising that frictions on trivial matters became commonplace phenomenon leading to the resignation of even those few Pandit leaders who had joined the organization.

Religion had played an important role in the rise of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah as the most popular leader of the Muslim masses. But shortly after the formation of the National Conference the non-Muslim leaders of the Conference began to stress upon him to change his religious oriented methods of mass mobilization. They wanted him not to recite the Holy Quran from the National Conference platform as was the practice in past.[61] But to accept this suggestion was not less than a political suicide for him because the opposite forces like Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah and some young Muslim leaders had already declared the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference as a betrayal with the Muslim masses.[62] It is pertinent to mention here that it was a period when the rate of modern education among the Muslim masses was still low to whom progressive politics carried no meaning.

Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah always experienced difficulty in working with the Hindu leaders of the National Conference. They raised objections against the shouting of slogans like *Nara-e-Takbīr* (a slogan shouted by the Muslims especially in religious congregations which means that God is supreme) in National Conference sessions and mass meetings on the plea that it blurred the secular character of the Conference. He tried his best to convince them by saying that he did so keeping in view the tradition and mental faculty of the audience. He also referred to Indian National Congress that had adopted *Bande Mataram* as its national song when a major part of this poem was against the Muslim sentiments and the Muslim nationalists did not raise any objection against it. But all such explanations proved of no avail.[63]

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61 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.245.

62 Tashir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol. II, pp.92-93.

63 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, pp.245-246.

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The Pandit leaders were disgusted because they felt that Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah was trying to soothe the religious sentiments of the Muslims by celebrating *Eid-i-Mīlād*. Shaikh's difficulty lay in the fact that the Muslim Conference (revived by young Muslim leaders in March, 1940) was threatening to assume the character of all Kashmir movement. The Muslim League – the political mentor of the Muslim Conference, early in 1940 had thrown a challenge to his devotion to Islam by organising *Eid-i-Mīlād*. Abdullah too decided to celebrate the *Eid-i-Mīlād*. The Pandit members of the Conference did not appreciate this. It led to the resignation of two prominent Kashmiri Pandit leaders, Pandit Jai Lal Kilam and Pandit Kishap Bandhu from the Working Committee as well as from the primary membership of National Conference.[64] Moreover, the Muslim Conference resented the Government orders of 1940 regarding the introduction of the double script.[65] The Muslim leadership of the National Conference became desperate. They were placed in a very difficult situation. Their unqualified condemnation of the Government orders alienated Prem Nath Bazaz, another Pandit member of the Working Committee who resigned from the Conference on 28 November 1940.[66] However, in case of Prem Nath Bazaz who was the most liberal and foresighted leader it is also believed that he parted his ways with National Conference leadership owing to the authoritarian behaviour of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah.[67]

The Pandit leaders also raised objections against the celebration of the Martyrs Day of 13 July 1931. In their opinion these martyrs had laid down their lives exclusively for the Muslim cause. Therefore, the celebration of their anniversary under the auspices of National Conference would be against its secular character.[68]

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64 Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol.II, pp.98-99.

65 It is pertinent to point out here that in October, 1940, the Government ordered the introduction of double script in State schools. It was aimed at the policy of divide and rule against the nationalists, creating dissensions in their ranks and sabotaging the common platform. For details see Fida Muhammad Hassnain, *Freedom Struggle in Kashmir*, pp.104-105.

66 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.186.

67 An interview with Jagan Nath Sathu a contemporary socialist leader and close associate of Prem Nath Baza, August 22, 1999.

68 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.254.

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In Legislative Assembly, Chaudhary Hamidullah's cut motion to discuss the preponderance of the Kashmiri Pandits was supported by the National Conference. It raised a storm of protest in the Pandit circles and their press.[69] How long could the Pandits remain in a movement, which tended to undermine their privileged position? They wanted the National Conference to follow the footprints of the Indian National Congress in all its policies and activities.[70] After their resignation Pandit Jai Lal Kilam and Pandit Kishap Bandhu registered their protest against Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah before Pandit Nehru. But he rejected their plea with contempt,[71]

True, some prominent Hindu leaders like Pandit Jai Lal Kilam, Shiv Naraian Fotedar and Pandit Kishap Bandhu returned to the National Conference in June 1943. But it was more an opportunistic attitude than a change of hearts. After all, the end of autocratic rule was now clear in sight.

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69 Ibid., p.247. It is pertinent to mention here that in 1945 Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru on the invitation of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah visited Kashmir. The Kashmiri Pandits invited him separately and presented him an address at Sheetal Nath, Srinagar. While presenting the address Pandit Jai Lal Kilam referred to the glorious past and culture of Hinduism. In response to it Pandit Nehru made a critical evaluation of his observations related to the glorious past. He also told the Pandits blatantly that their politics revolved round the interest of Government services. For details see Tasir, *Tehrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmīr*, vol. II, pp.425-426.

70 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.174.

71 Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, *Ātish-i-Chinār*, p.247.

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Conclusion

To become free, to end tyranny and to abolish superstition.
This is my cherished dream, this my desire and this my slogan.
(Abdul Ahad Azad)

The fundamental cause of people's unrest all over the world had been socio-economic and political in nature. The struggle for freedom in Kashmir was also the outcome of economic exploitation, social discrimination and political subjugation. The Dogra rulers who ruled over Kashmir for more than a century failed to develop among the millions of their subjects, any sense of identity of interests with ruling class. No doubt it was during this period that the State was placed on modern lines by establishing a centralized Government, introducing Western system of education, constructing roads and canals and installing electricity which gave certainly a new shape to the State. But most of these measures were initiated very late and only after the intervention of the British Government of India when it established a full-fledged Residency in Kashmir in 1885 and made the later Dogra rulers to take up certain measures towards the administrative reform in order to ensure the socio-economic welfare of their subjects. The basic structure of the Dogra Government was feudalistic in nature. The Dogra rulers considered Kashmir as their purchased property and thus ruled over their subjects as a master rules over his slaves. The reassertion of Kashmiris was, therefore, a historical necessity.

The first and foremost factor that accounted for the rise of disaffection against the Dogra regime was its sectarian nature. The Dogra rulers demonstrated an open bias in favour of their co-

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religionists when they withdrew the privileges of the Muslims and bestowed the same upon the non-Muslims. For instance, when Maharaja Gulab Singh took over as the ruler of the State in 1846, he confiscated the land grants of the Muslims and transferred the same to the non-Muslims. It was not true of Maharaja Gulab Singh alone but it remained a constant feature of the policy of the Dogra regime. The Dogra rulers confiscated several religious places and mosques of the Muslims. They did not care for their religious susceptibilities when they converted some shrines and mosques into store houses for arms and ammunition. This is not all, the Dogra rulers openly demonstrated their fanaticism when they awarded death sentence and life imprisonment or imposed heavy fines to Kashmiri Muslims against the cow-slaughter. The Kashmiri Muslims who constituted eighty per cent of the population of the State and who filled the State coffers were according to Prem Nath Bazaz, 'dealt with harshly only because they were Muslims' and 'were synonymous to hewers of wood and drawers of water'.

The Dogra rule had an autocratic and despotic character. It is evident from the fact that whereas the nationalist press of British India originated by the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, the people of Kashmir were devoid of all such facilities and there was a strict ban on the freedom of press as late as 1931. It would not be out of place to mention that in 1875 there were 478 newspapers being published in British India, whereas in Kashmir, Prem Nath Bazaz published the first organ representing the interest of the masses called *Vitasta* in 1932. Besides, there existed no public opinion, as there was a blanket ban against the formation of political associations and organizations as late as 1932. Sir Albion Banerji, the Foreign and Political Minister of Maharaja Hari Singh after his resignation had rightly observed in a press conference at Lahore, that the people of Kashmir were treated as 'dumb driven cattle'.

The Dogra rulers followed a policy of the communalization of State services. During the early period of their rule the outsiders exclusively manned the State apparatus. But with the passage of time the local Pandits replaced the outsiders. The Pandits entered the Government offices as clerks but in due course of time rose to higher positions. As officials, the Kashmiri Pandits have proved rapacious and cruel, a fact which is borne out by most of the contemporary sources. They sucked the lifeblood of the working classes who generally

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belonged to the Muslim community and the result was that a purely economic freedom struggle assumed 'communal' colour.

Like their brethren in British India, the Muslims of Kashmir did not respond to modern education for a pretty long time. On the other hand, the Kashmiri Pandits were the first beneficiaries of modern education. After acquiring modern education they managed to enter Government offices and, later on, made it difficult for the Muslims even to get menial jobs. As late as 1924 when the Kashmiri Muslims had made some reasonable headway in the modern education one finds a striking contrast in the representation of the two communities in the Government services. According to a statement that the memorialists of 1924 had prepared on the basis of the civil list, the number of non-Muslim gazetted officers in Kashmir was 421 whose monthly salary amounted to Rs.16,50,114. The number of the gazetted officers belonging to Muslim community was hardly 55 whose salaries amounted to Rs.1,47,325. In 1931 when the Kashmiri Muslims had made a considerable progress in the modern education and a sizeable number of the Muslim students had returned from the British Indian universities with higher academic degrees, the total number of the Muslim gazetted officers in different departments was only 50 and those of the Hindus 316. The creed wise representation of various gazetted and non-gazetted positions in the State services, borne out by the contemporary sources, during 1930-31 was as under:

S.No.	Departments	Hindus	Muslims
1.	Revenue	133	31
2.	Customs	150	19
3.	Justice	33	03
4.	Health	175	32
5.	Police	800	626
6.	Education	51	6
	Total	**1342**	**717**

During the period under reference, Kashmir possessed a medieval type of economy and its main branches were agriculture and cottage industries. As soon as Maharaja Gulab Singh took over as the ruler of the State, he declared the age-old proprietary rights of the peasantry null and void in order to legitimize the policy of the maximization of revenues. The Kashmiri Pandits not only constituted the bureaucracy, but also formed the dominant majority of the landed aristocracy. The Dogra rulers left the peasantry, which exclusively belonged to the

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Muslim community, at the mercy of the corrupt officials and privileged landholders. They were fleecing the peasantry to the extent of starvation. Their depredations and atrocities against the docile peasant population were monstrous. The exorbitant taxation policy of the State did no less in generating the agrarian crisis because everything except air and drinking water was heavily taxed. Besides, the institution of *begar* had eaten into the vitals of the peasant class, as it was the main target of forced labour. Such a kind of State policy had broken the back of this class beyond the hope of any recovery.

Next to the peasantry, the most discontented segment of the population of Kashmir was the shawl-weavers and workers of other cottage industries. These workers mostly hailed from urban areas especially Srinagar and exclusively belonged to the Muslim community. Like peasantry the shawl-weavers also lived in chronic poverty because of their exploitation by the State as well as its officials. The officials of the *Daghshawl* were sucking the lifeblood of this class by exacting the usual *nazrana.* The heavy taxation policy of the State as well as the official oppression had forced the *shawlbafs* of Srinagar to revolt against the Government earlier in 1865. But the agitation lacked the organised character that accounted for its failure. Again in 1924, the labourers of the Silk Factory, Srinagar, had launched an agitation against the corruption and atrocities of the Pandit officialdom and the payment of the extremely low wages. But the agitation had been severely dealt with and crushed.

Why the Muslims of Kashmir did not respond to modern education is a question, which often strikes one's mind. As already mentioned that they generally belonged to working classes and their economic conditions were extremely low. The exorbitant taxation policy that had continued during the centuries of alien rule had ruined the Muslim masses. The urban Muslim population generally comprised the artisan class mostly shawl-weavers who were tied to the loom whereas the rural Muslim population was tied to agriculture. Their economic backwardness was, therefore, the most important factor that kept them away from the modern education. Another significant reason behind their poor response to modern education was the conservative approach and the selfish machinations of the Muslim religious class. The orthodox *mullahs* dissuaded the Kashmiri Muslims from taking up modern education by preaching that it would turn them apostates and they would not be able to distinguish between the right and wrong. However, when this class itself realized the blessings of the Western

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education, it stole a march in the field. But, ironically enough they continued to denounce and discourage the dissemination of modern education among the Muslim masses for a long time. Moreover, the Dogra rulers were also callous towards the education of their subjects in general and those of the Muslims in particular, for political as well as economic reasons.

During the twenties of the twentieth century the number of Muslim students in educational institutions rose to become equal if not greater than the non-Muslim students. An interesting feature of the education of the Muslim community was that many of the Muslim students while emulating the Hindu boys went outside to get higher academic degrees from the British Indian universities. During the course of their stay in India these young men had an opportunity to witness the various tempestuous waves of the Indian national movement, which laid a profound impact on their mind. It was these young Muslims who on their return blazed the trail for freedom in Kashmir.

The impact of Western education resulted in the rise of socio-religious reform movements in Kashmir. The leaders of these movements were the first generation of the Kashmiris imbued with modern ideas. The misinterpretation of scriptures by the religious classes had granted conformity to numerous unnecessary rituals and customs that crippled the individual and collective liberty of the people. They had fallen in the abyss of ignorance and religion had become the monopoly of the religious classes. Since religion was the dominant factor in the social life of the people and it was impossible to carry out any mission without coming into grip with it. The reformers, therefore, stressed on the popularity of the doctrine type of religion, wherein there was no room for intermediaries between the God and man. They not only instilled a spirit of confidence among the people and awakened them to their birthrights, but they also made spread of modern education as the main plank of their programme, and thus played a significant role towards the rise of political consciousness in Kashmir.

The Punjabi Muslims in general, and those of Kashmiri origin in particular, whose ancestors in the past had migrated to plains, because of the oppression of alien rulers, made a remarkable contribution towards the struggle for freedom in Kashmir. They not only extended moral and material support to the Kashmir movement but also kept their press at the disposal of the Kashmiri leadership in order to give a

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wide coverage to Kashmir affairs and to arouse political consciousness among the Kashmiris. Prior to the formation of the Reading Room Party and the Muslim Conference the Punjabi Muslims had organised several *anjumans* (associations) to represent the cause of Kashmiri Muslims.

The political consciousness began to dawn upon the Valley of Kashmir during the twenties of the twentieth century. The most important move towards this direction was the presentation of a memorial of grievances by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading during his visit to the Valley in 1924. But this nascent consciousness blossomed during 1930 when a batch of young Muslim students returned from various Indian universities with high academic degrees. These young men were denied the Government services suitable to their qualifications. Therefore, they came forward to lead the discontented masses in order to change the character of the Dogra rule. Since the formation of associations and organisations was banned in the State, they organised a Reading Room Party (1930) in the garb of which they discussed the problems faced by the Muslim community and mobilized the masses towards launching of an organised struggle. The incident of 13th July 1931, in which 22 Muslims laid down their lives outside the Central Jail, Srinagar, shook the very foundations of the Dogra rule and brought a revolutionary change in the out-look of the masses as well. It was from this event that the freedom struggle of Kashmir started with a gigantic force. However, the formal inauguration of the movement was made in an open mass meeting held at Pather Masjid, Srinagar, between 15th and 17th March 1932, culminating in the formation of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference.

The Hindus not only adopted indifferent attitude towards the freedom struggle, but also left no stone unturned to sabotage it. It resulted into Hindu-Muslim antagonism and a minor riot between the two communities in 1931. Needless to emphasize, such sporadic conflicts were essentially rooted in class antagonism rather than communal hatred.

The Kashmiri Pandits held a prejudiced opinion about the character of the movement on the ground that it was supported by the forces of Muslim communalism from outside the State. They also held that it was a foreign-engineered movement and enjoyed the patronage of the British. Besides, they alleged that there was the communist hand

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behind the movement. All these views were not only contradictory but also the fabricated stories, far away from the truth. No doubt the two Muslim organisations viz. Ahmadiyas and Ahrars extended their support to the Kashmir movement. But their support was not based on any communal hatred. It was a moral support based on humanitarian grounds. They did not demand the deposition of the Maharaja but wanted the amelioration of the condition of Kashmiri Muslims under the Dogra rule. As far as the next view that the Kashmir movement was a foreign engineered movement is concerned, the present work have proved it beyond doubt that the Kashmir freedom movement was indigenous in nature and character. The Dogra rulers were themselves the vassals of the British imperialism and both the British Indian Government and the Dogra Government had always stood behind each other through thick and thin. However, from 1885 onwards the British Government of India wanted the later Dogra rulers to reform their decadent administration. That may have created a suspicion among the critics of Muslim Conference who held that the Kashmir movement enjoyed the British patronage. The allegation that the freedom movement of Kashmir had a communist hand behind it was also baseless. The fact was that the Muslim leadership of the movement received an inspiration from the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and as such it had made a progressive approach to the problems faced by them during the course of the struggle. But the Kashmir movement as such was not the result of any communist conspiracy against the Dogra rule.

The immediate fall out of 13 July 1931 incident was that the Maharaja appointed a high level commission under the chairmanship of B.J. Glancy on 12 November 1931 in order to look into the grievances of the various communities of the State. The Commission attested the plight of the Muslim masses and, therefore, made various recommendations for their socio-economic welfare.

The Muslim leadership from the very inception was eager enough to muster the support of the non-Muslims in order to launch a joint struggle against the prevailing system. But the non-Muslims were not ready to join any such move aimed at disturbing the status-quo. It made the Muslim leadership to name their organisation after the name of their own community. But it did not mean that Muslim Conference was in any way a communal organisation with a communal manifesto. Muslim Conference had a class rather than communal character and the struggle it launched during its seven years life benefited the non-Muslim masses as well.

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There is no denying the fact that the Glancy Commission had made several recommendations to improve the condition of the Muslim masses, but most of these recommendations remained simply as paper edicts for a long time or were not properly implemented. Therefore, the proper implementation of the Glancy Commission recommendations formed the crux of the programme and activities of the Muslim Conference.

The demands and the methods of political work of the Muslim Conference leadership bore a close resemblance with those of the early Indian Nationalists. Their vision was as broad as that of the leadership of any other progressive organisation of the Subcontinent. The Conference had a concrete social welfare programme to its credit. It included the mobilization of the masses towards modern education, bringing about the social reforms, defending the interests of the working classes against the corrupt officials and the money-lenders, and to stress upon the State to provide educational and medical facilities to its subjects. Moreover, the Conference stressed upon the masses to raise their moral standards, to refrain from dragging each other to the courts and to come out of the abyss of ignorance.

Constitutional reforms formed a significant feature of the programme of the Muslim Conference. It was because of the struggle of the Conference that a Legislative Assembly was established in the State in 1934. Though it was a powerless institution, it served a great purpose by providing a common platform for the leadership of various communities of the State and provided an opportunity for them to understand that the main problems of the masses in general were mostly common and mainly economic in nature. It was due to the constant efforts of the Conference that other types of democratic institutions like Municipal Committees and the District Boards were established in the State. The Conference always strived for assigning a responsible character to all these institutions through the system of universal adult franchise and by avoiding the method of nominations. The establishment of a responsible Government was the main slogan of the Muslim Conference. In addition to its struggle for the development of the democratic institutions, the Conference also fought for the achievement and the safeguard of civil liberties like the freedom of press and platform.

The economic emancipation of masses was the most fundamental feature of the programmes and activities of the Muslim Conference. It

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always struggled for the welfare of the working classes like peasants, artisans and labourers who were the worst hit of imperial exploitation. The Conference demanded the reduction of the land revenue and to provide latest technology and hybrid seeds to the peasantry. It was because of the efforts of the Conference that the proprietary rights in *khalsa* lands were restored to the peasantry of Kashmir in 1933. While demanding the development of the agriculture and the welfare of the peasantry it often referred to the neighbouring province of Punjab where the Government had taken various measures in this regard. In its annual sessions the Conference gave a wide coverage to the plight of the peasantry and their deplorable conditions. It urged upon the State to safeguard the interests of this class against corrupt officials, privileged landholders and money-lenders. The struggle launched by the Muslim leadership resulted into the confidence building among docile peasantry and they began to assert against the atrocities and the depredations of the landed aristocracy, and the corrupt officialdom. Thus, the Conference played a commendable role towards the upliftment of the peasantry.

The Conference voiced its concern over the apathetic attitude of the Government towards the deplorable condition of the artisans and craftsmen. It encouraged and persuaded them not to give up their professions under the prevailing economic crisis. The great depression of 1929 and the importation of machine-made goods in the Valley had adversely affected the handicrafts and a large number of artisans were thrown out of employment. In order to overcome this problem the leadership demanded that the Government should open model factories to educate the artisans about the European technology so that they would be able to compete with the machine-made goods. To protect the local arts from total decline it also demanded financial assistance for the artisans and the reduction in custom duties.

The Conference vehemently criticized the industrial policy of the State as according to it Kashmir was bestowed with rich natural resources, but the Government was not doing anything to exploit them. It was demanded that the Government should seek the expertise of the companies who were specialized in exploiting the mineral resources. The leadership rightly argued that by exploiting the natural deposits the State would not only provide livelihood to a large number of unemployed labourers but would also enhance its revenues.

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The Muslim Conference expressed its disappointment over the sectarian recruitment policy of the State, which was not changed even after the Glancy Commission recommendations. It was demanded that the Muslims be given preference while making appointments so that the community-wise disparity of the officials in various departments is balanced. Besides, the leadership drew the attention of the Government towards the crucial problem of unemployment. In this context, it made a significant point that while collecting the figures about unemployed youth the Government had committed a mistake of including only educated unemployed youth and ignoring a large number of uneducated youth who too were suffering for want of livelihood. It emphasized that an unemployed graduate did not necessarily suffer from hunger and lack of the basic necessities of life, because out of unemployed educated youth eighty-five per cent belonged to prosperous families. It rightly argued that their problem was not as critical as that of any educated or uneducated youth belonging to a poor family.

The methods of political work adopted by the Conference included the holding of annual sessions, launching vigorous agitations and organising mass meetings for persuading as well as pressurizing the Government for acceding to its popular demands. Like the Indian national movement, the strategy of the Muslim Conference was also based on the formula of Struggle-Trace-Struggle (S-T-S). In this strategy phases of extra-legal mass movements alternate with more 'passive' phases during which political activity is carried on within the confines of the legal space, and the struggle proceeds through stages without losing its anti-imperialist edge. In this strategy, ideological struggle and popular consciousness and the political activity of the masses play central role. Under this strategy the state power is not seized in a single historical moment of revolution, but through prolonged popular struggle on a moral, political and ideological level; where reserves of counter-hegemony are built up over the years through progressive stages and where the phases of struggle alternate with 'passive' phases.

As mentioned earlier, right from the beginning, leadership of the Conference was eager enough to form a common platform of the various communities in order to broaden the base of the movement and to launch a united struggle against the autocratic rule. Owing to its progressive character, the leadership of the Conference came increasingly under the influence of the ideology of Indian National Congress during the late thirties of the twentieth century. It led to the

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conversion of the Muslim Conference into National Conference. In order to facilitate the support of the non-Muslim masses, the Muslim leadership not only changed the nomenclature of the organization but also brought necessary changes in its constitution. However, the new organisation could not win the favour of the non-Muslim masses. The most important factor behind the divergent political approach of the Muslim and non-Muslim masses was the heterogeneity of their economic interests. Speaking generally, the former belonged to the un-privileged, whereas the latter to the privileged class. The Muslims aimed at changing the system whereas the non-Muslims stood for maintaining the status-quo.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Recording made during an interview with Khawaja Afzal Jalali, resident of Hawal, Srinagar, in November 1991. Mr. Jalali was a well-known freedom fighter and belonged to a *chakdar* family of our period of study. He was eighty years old.

Q. Since you had been yourself a *chakdar*, could you tell us how the produce of the *chak* land was divided between the *chakdar* and his *kashtkar*?

A. First, from the gross produce of paddy two *trakhs* were taken by the *chakdar* and this method was known as *trakhi*. Second, the rest of paddy and grass were divided equally between the two. Because of the absence of modern fertilizers and high yielding crops, the yield of per unit area of land was very low. Therefore, a very small quantity of produce was left with the peasant after he parted with a major share of his produce with his lord.

In this context it may also be noted that the peasant had also to pay his village landless brethren like barber, carpenter, cowherd, shepherd, ironsmith etc., who served him in different ways in terms of fixed quantity of paddy called *talab* (remuneration). Therefore, the peasant was left with a little produce that hardly sufficed his two or three months basic food needs.

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Q. Did the *chakdar* exact *rasum* from the peasants?

A. Yes, definitely. The poor peasants used to bring every kind of *rasum* like wood, fodder, poultry and blankets etc., from their respective villages to the *chakdar* who generally belonged to some urban area, especially Srinagar. They carried the loads of *rasum* through river by boats and from the *ghats* (ports) to *chakdar's hawaili* (mansion) on their backs. The *chakdar* treated them worse than animals. He did not allow them to spend the night in his mansion, instead they were asked to stay in some mosque where they shivered with cold.

Q. How did the *chakdar* evict his peasant?

A. Before the passing of Land Alienation Act and Agriculturalists Relief Act, the *chakdar* ejected his *kashtkar* at his sweat will. But after passing these Acts the *chakdar* had to request the concerned Tahsildar in this regard.

Q. On what grounds was the *kashtkar* evicted?

A. There were two main reasons that usually led to the eviction of a *kashtkar*. First, if he failed to cultivate the land and second, if he was not prompt in paying the *rasum.*

Q. Did the *chakdar* enact any kind of *begar* from his *kashtkar*?

A. Yes, if the *chakdar* had to construct his house, he employed his *kashtkar* for this purpose and without any remuneration. Once my father, Sayyid Shah Jalali took two boats of earthen pots of little value to Bamroo Gadkhud located in Tahsil Sonawari and in lieu of it got a wall constructed around 1700 kanals of land there. The incident also speaks of the pathetic conditions of the *kashtkars.*

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APPENDIX - B

Recording made during an interview with Khawaja Ghulam Hassan Ganai, resident of Audsoo, Ṭahsil Anantnag on July 10, 1992. He was a peasant-cum-Numbardar. Numbardari was his hereditary assignment. He was eighty-five years old.

Q. Could a *chakdar* evict a peasant? When were the proprietary rights given to the peasants working in *chak* lands?

A. Yes, why not? My father, Abdul Aziz Ganai who was also a Numbardar was ejected by his *chakdar,* Nath Ram of Rainawari, Srinagar. Evictions were common. It was only after 1947 when the nationalists came to power that the eviction powers of the *chakdars* were withdrawn.

As far as proprietary rights in *chak* lands are concerned, in case of big estate holders whose estates exceeded 182 kanals, the proprietary rights were conferred to the peasantry by the nationalist Government in 1950. The minor *chakdars* continued to take their share of produce till recent past.

Q. How did the *chakdar* realize his share and what was its magnitude? Did he realize any legal or illegal tax?

A. When the harvest season approached, the *chakdar* would arrive in the village of his estate with his entourage and stay for days together in advance till his share was brought safely to the place he would order *kashtkars* to carry it. During his long stay of one month or more he was fed by his *kashtkars.* They were supposed to provide the *chakdar* rice, oil, poultry and other eatables during this period, and the custom was known as *ras.* It was necessary to harvest and thrash the crops in presence of the *chakdar.* If any *kashtkar* by chance threshed the crop in the absence of *chakdar,* he had to pay to the *chakdar* the same quantity as was paid by him in the preceeding year. I remember that when a *kashtkar* of our village namely Ibrahim Ganai collected the paddy crop outside *chak-khal* (fixed spot where the *chak* peasants collected the crops) without the consent of the *chakdar,* he was mercilessly beaten by his lord Nath Ram, the resident of Rainawari, Srinagar.

I am witness to various types of *begar* enacted by the *chakdars* from their peasants. For instance, if the *chakdar* had to construct a house, he employed his *kashtkars* for this purpose and did not pay

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them anything in return. If any one hesitated in responding to the orders of his lord, he was evicted from the land.

In the presence of *chakdar* the produce was divided into two equal parts, one would go to *chakdar* and another to his *kashtkar*. In addition to this, two *trakhs* per *kharwar* of the gross produce were taken by the *chakdar*. It was known as *trakhi.*

Q. What was the condition of common peasantry?

A. The peasants popularly known in Kashmir as *zamindars* were living in an extremely chronic poverty. There used to be a few families in a village, which fulfilled their barest necessities out of their land produce, that was left to them after paying *mujawaza* (payment of land revenue in kind). Since the grains were not imported from outside and in order to feed the urban population the State collected a part of its revenues in the form of *mujawaza.* The common peasantry exhausted the produce, that was left to them after forcing them to pay *mujawaza,* within two or three months after they harvested their staple crop of paddy. For the remaining nine months they lived on vegetables, fruits and other sub-standard diets. For the winter most of them left for Punjab where they worked as wage labourers.

Q. Who were the revenue officials and what was their attitude towards peasantry?

A. The revenue officials were Zaildars, Tahsildars, Naib-Tahsildars, Girdawars, Patwaris, Chowkidars and Numbardars. They often employed the peasants in their own lands without any remuneration. Besides, they forced the peasants to share with them fodder, poultry, blankets, butter and other items which a peasant produced domestically. The exaction of these requisites was collectively known as *rasum.* If any peasant hesitated in paying *rasum*, he was not only severely beaten under one pretext or the other but also persecuted in different ways by these officials. The peasant had no access to the higher officials to whom he would make a complaint. And for that matter all the officials from top to bottom were in league with one another. It was only after the formation of the Muslim Conference that some sense of confidence started developing among the peasantry here and there. There are individual cases where the peasants objected to harsh treatment meted out to them by revenue and other officials.

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APPENDIX - C

Recording made during an interview with Jagan Nath Sathu, an outstanding journalist of Kashmir, on 22 August 1999. Born in 1924 at Batpora, Shopian (Kashmir), Mr. Sathu had joined Prem Nath Bazaz's Urdu daily, *Hamdard*, as its city reporter in 1942, and continued to work for the said organ upto 1947 when it was banned. Ideologically Mr. Sathu belonged to Kashmir Socialist Party and was one of the close associates of Prem Nath Bazaz.

Q. May you please summarize the economic and political conditions of Kashmir during the Dogra rule?

A. The political system was autocratic and economic condition of the masses was deplorable. But the economic condition of Muslims was extremely low in comparison to the Kashmiri Pandits.

Q. Why was the freedom movement of Kashmir initiated by the Muslims despite the fact that Kashmiri Pandits were educationally advanced than the former?

A. The Kashmiri Pandits by and large belonged to the privileged class and, therefore, were not ready to initiate any move that would go against the system.

Q. Why did the freedom struggle of Kashmir start very late in comparison to the freedom movement of India?

A. Because of the non-availability of leadership. The socio-economic condition of British India was relatively better than the Princely States.

Q. There had been propaganda that Kashmir movement was a foreign-engineered movement. What is your opinion?

A. I do not agree with it. The freedom movement of Kashmir was indigenous in origin and nature.

Q. Do you find any role of the Punjabi Muslim leaders in the formation of Muslim Conference in 1932?

A. Obviously. They played an important role in disseminating the political consciousness among Kashmiri Muslims, which ultimately culminated in the formation of Muslim Conference.

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Q. What was the role of Muslim Conference during its seven years life?

A. The Conference played a commendable role in emancipating the social, political and economic condition of the masses.

Q. What were the objectives for which the Muslim Conference was converted into National Conference?

A. The fundamental objective underlying the conversion of the Muslim Conference into National Conference was to woo the support and sympathy of the communities other than Muslims in order to organize a common platform with a broad-based programme.

Q. Generally the Kashmiri Pandits did not join the cadres of National Conference as was expected by the nationalist leaders. What were the reasons?

A. Doubts and fears. By and large the Kashmiri Pandits did not want to be ruled by the Muslim majority.

Q. To my opinion, the National Conference could not succeed in organizing a joint platform of various communities throughout the freedom struggle. What is your opinion?

A. I fully agree with you.

Q. What could be the most important reason leading to parting of ways between Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz?

A. To quote my contemporary and colleague Mr. Prem Nath Bazaz, 'the Shaikh was authoritarian in approach'.

Q. What was the role of *Hamdard* in disseminating the social, political and economic consciousness among the people of Kashmir?

A. The role of *Hamdard* was manifold. It was not only a harbinger of consciousness but also the real representative of all the ideological streams of the State.

Q. From 1942 onwards *Hamdard* used to publish poems in Kashmiri that were critical of nationalist politics. Who was the main composer of such poems?

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A. Yes, of course. One person I vividly remember was Abdul Aziz Mir, a young socialist leader who had organised the Muslim Socialist Party.

Q. In 1946 an alliance was formed between the leadership of Kisan Mazdoor Conference and Kashmir Socialist Party. What were the basis of this historic alliance?

A. The crux of Kisan-Socialist alliance was to free the Kashmiris from the shackles of the autocratic regime and to lay down the socio-economic foundations of our society on an egalitarian basis.

Q. In 1947 the prominent leaders of three ideological entities i.e. Muslim Conference (1941-1947), Kisan Mazdoor Conference and the Kashmir Socialist Party left the Valley. What were the reasons that made them to leave their homeland once for all?

A. As soon as the nationalists assumed power, the stalwarts of all the three parties were put behind the bars. Their release was made conditional to their permanent exile.

Q. Who was the ideologue of the Kashmir Socialist Party and what was the theme of its manifesto?

A. Its ideologue was M.N.Roy, the well-known radical leader of the Indian Subcontinent. The programme and manifesto of our organisation was based along progressive lines.

Q. What was the nature of the resolutions, which were passed in a joint Congress of Kisan Mazdoor Conference and Kashmir Socialist Party in 1946 at Kabamarg, Anantnag and subsequently published in the daily *Hamdard*?

A. All these resolutions were progressive and revolutionary in nature.

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About the Book

It is a commendable attempt on the part of the author to study a significant aspect of the modern history of Kashmir. He has rationally and systematically analysed the reasons behind the formation of the Muslim Conference. He has correctly estimated the despotic and autocratic nature of the Dogra rule, the exploitation of the peasantry at the hands of the governing class, the agrarian crisis, discontent of the labour class, educational growth and intellectual awakening among the Kashmiri Muslims, the role of socio - religious reform movements, the support of Indian Muslim in general and those of Punjabis in particular as the potential factors leading to the emergence of the phenomenon embodying the Muslim Conference in Kashmir.

The present work also deals with the role played by the Conference in arousing the social, political and intellectual consciousness of the Muslims. It also focusses on the aims, aspirations, demands and endeavours of the Muslim leadership and its attempts at forging Hindu-Muslim unity and upliftment of the general masses. The author has utilized and classified the source material intelligently and has drawn sound conclusions.

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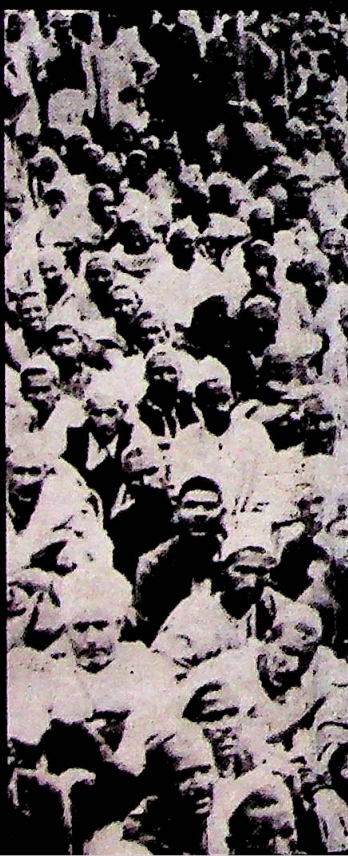
The author has meticulously dealt with various aspects related to the freedom struggle of Kashmir and the contradictions therein. The exploitation of the working classes and the apathetic attitude of the rulers has been brought out clearly well. The author has also very successfully demonstrated the pro-Maharaja attitude of the Hindu Maha-sabha which obviously went against the freedom struggle. He has proved that there was no communist hand behind the movement. However, the Muslim leadership did receive inspiration from the Indian communists.

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